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Hyper-Pluralism and the RELICS Method:  
How Religious Expression via Living Inter-personal Conceptual Schemata  
Accounts for Religious Diversity



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## Abstract

This paper offers a new method for a new pluralism. The author offers an examination of John Hick's religious pluralism and George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory (CMT). After detailing the amendments required for both Hick's pluralism and Lakoff and Johnson's CMT the author offers an updated version of the former and an amended version of the latter. In the final section a 'hyper-pluralism' is offered as well as a method for the account of religious diversity through religious expression via living inter-personal conceptual schemata (RELICS).

**KEYWORDS:** Religious Diversity, Pluralism, Hyper-Pluralism, Metaphor, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Religious Expression

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The images included in this work are all watercolours by Czech painter Eduard Tomek. The necessary information on each of these images is included at the end of the paper. The purpose they serve is to acknowledge the irony of using words to describe what originates in wordlessness. I am of the strong opinion that the images shown throughout this paper, like many pieces of art, say more on the nature of religious expression than I could hope to express. As I don't have the right brushes, I offer this paper instead.

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## SECTION I: John Hick's Religious Pluralism





## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to provide a method which can be used as a hyper-pluralist account of religious diversity. Before we can do that however, we must first designate the landscape this method will operate in. This first section is concerned with an evaluation of John Hick's religious pluralism. It is from this evaluation we will reveal the amendments that need to be made in order for a hyper-pluralist position to be posited and maintained. Section II evaluates George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory, its shortcomings and the expansion it requires after hearing from pre-cognitive considerations. It is in the merging of the findings from these two sections which will constitute the work in Section III. Here we briefly entertain a possible alternative of this merging before establishing the hyper-pluralist position. Finally, I offer a method, based on work in Sections I & II, of accounting for religious diversity within the understanding of religious expression via living inter-personal conceptual schemata (RELICS). Irrespective of its manifestation all religious expression is comprised of this fundamental structure. Each subpart in the first two sections is accompanied by a subheading, these are the foundational building blocks which we will take with us into Section III. The motivation for this thesis is to create a foundation for inter-faith dialogue which values difference as an opportunity for learning.

## PART 1: Hick's Pluralism

Pluralism is a theory concerned with explaining the presence of religious diversity. Pluralism holds that not all, but more than one religion can provide a means of salvation/liberation. Hick's religious pluralism is a philosophical outlook which contends that most of the world's great religious traditions are not only able to co-exist but are more or less equally salvific. This is because each of these religious traditions is an equally valid phenomenological response to a noumenal reality. Hick introduced his pluralism to the world prior to 1989, but it was in this year with his *An Interpretation of Religion* (hence known simply as *Interpretation*) that his hypothesis was fully formed. It is excerpts from this text that this first part relies on heavily. The following section is as much a clarifying of terms as it is an exposition of a theory. Although Hick's pluralism operates in the same space as other philosophies of religion, he uses specific terms in specific ways. These terms denote foundational concepts in his theory; essentially, to understand the theory we must understand the terms. The two pillars of Hick's pluralism are his adoption of the Kantian noumenal/phenomenal distinction and the soteriological concern of the world's religions.

First, the term pluralism comes from a typology for defining the different attitudes towards religious diversity. This threefold typology was first introduced by Christian theologian Alan Race in 1983, however a distillation of Race's work can be found in Perry Schmidt-Leukel's article *Exclusivism, Inclusivism, Pluralism: The Tripolar Typology—Clarified and Reaffirmed*. The definitions of the three types he provides are the following:

- i.) Exclusivism: Salvific knowledge of a transcendent reality is mediated by only one religion (which naturally will be one's own)
- ii.) Inclusivism: Salvific knowledge of a transcendent reality is mediated by more than one religion (not necessarily by all of them), but only one of these

mediates it in a uniquely superior way (which again will naturally be one's own).

- iii.) Pluralism: Salvific knowledge of a transcendent reality is mediated by more than one religion (not necessarily by all of them), and there is none among them whose mediation of that knowledge is superior to all the rest.<sup>1</sup>

A discussion on inclusivism is outside the scope of this thesis but for Hick, the conflict between pluralism and exclusivism is one which can't be resolved and therefore should be abandoned. To him the exclusivist is "encased in impenetrable armour"; the assertion that he knows *a priori* that all religious traditions are false except his own.<sup>2</sup> Exclusivism is a common view shared by many religious adherents of many religious traditions. However, for Hick there is a responsibility for all philosophers of religion to account for the relationship and diversity between religious traditions.<sup>3</sup> Exclusivism is not so much a theory of religious diversity but a lack of willingness to come to the table.

Admittedly, Hick's pluralism requires a concession; the admission of the argument for the "rational permissibility of trusting religious experience to be responsive as well as projective."<sup>4</sup> The admission of the religious pluralist, at least in Hick's case, is the theory as a religious interpretation of religion. It maintains the central conceit that religious experience is not just an imaginative projection but can also be accompanied by a cognitive reaction to a transcendental reality.<sup>5</sup> Naturally every religious tradition uses particular terms for their object of worship. Within his pluralist philosophy of religion, the term Hick nominates is 'the Real' or 'transcendental Real' which refers to "the postulated ground of the different forms of religious experience".<sup>6</sup> A brief note: Whilst not central to his theory Hick uses the term 'thought-and-experienced' in his writing to denote the human experience of the phenomenal Real. I've included it here as it is a clear indication of Hick's non-binary attitude to human religious interpretation.<sup>7</sup>

Hick acknowledges early in *Interpretation* his adoption of pre-existing concepts within which to house his pluralism. One of these concepts is the delineation between what are termed pre-axial and post-axial religions. Pre-axial religions being those primarily but not exclusively concerned with the cosmic order of the universe and its safeguarding of a social hierarchy; with post-axial religions being those primarily but not exclusively concerned with liberation or salvation.<sup>8</sup> This is primarily a sociological distinction that was born out of the coining of the first millennium of the common era as the 'axial age' whereby multiple civilisations culturally expanded rapidly roughly at the same time. This delineation is important for Hick because his theory is one which concerns post-axial religions specifically. However, as we

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<sup>1</sup> Schmidt-Leukel, Perry. "Exclusivism, Inclusivism, Pluralism: The Tripolar Typology—Clarified and Reaffirmed". In *The Myth of Religious Superiority*, ed. Paul Knitter, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005), p20.

<sup>2</sup> Hick, John. 2006. "Exclusivism Versus Pluralism In Religion: A Response To Kevin Meeker". *Religious Studies* 42 (2): p207.

<sup>3</sup> Hick, *Exclusivism Versus Pluralism*, p207.

<sup>4</sup> Hick, John. 11th December 2002. Letter to Peter Heath, Box 23, Hick Archives.

<sup>5</sup> Hick, John. 1997. "The Possibility Of Religious Pluralism: A Reply To Gavin D'Costa". *Religious Studies* 33 (2): p164.

<sup>6</sup> Hick, John. 2004. *An Interpretation of Religion*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p236.

<sup>7</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, evidenced at p36, p243, p250.

<sup>8</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, p22.

will see later on, pre-axial religions play a role in elucidating the use of mythological language in religious traditions.

### Part 1.1 Kantian Distinction

*“The noumenal world exists independently of our perception of it and the phenomenal world is that same world as it appears to our human consciousness”<sup>9</sup>*

Although Hick adopts some of Kant’s epistemology it is important here to partition the separate uses of the noumenal/phenomenal distinction employed by each. Reductively, Kant’s first distinction operates as an epistemological foundation in the categories of understanding that the human mind uses to comprehend the world. Hick’s distinction is the transplanting of Kant’s distinction from general epistemology to specifically the epistemology of religion.<sup>10</sup> In 2002 Hick admits to friend and contemporary Peter Heath that his use of Kant’s noumena/phenomenal distinction within a religious context is one which Kant himself would not have allowed.<sup>11</sup> We know this because of the work Thomas William Ruston of the University of Birmingham has done in the analysis of an archive of Hick’s work both published and unpublished. Indeed, in Ruston’s own research he found that Heath voiced a concern that many of Hick’s critics continued to sound; namely, whether by giving a religious motivation for his philosophy of religion he takes the theory beyond criticism.<sup>12</sup>

By any means, where Hick feels justified in his transplanting of the noumenal/phenomenal distinction is that the essence of the distinction remains intact. The relationship between the noumenal Real and its phenomenal manifestations is essentially the relationship between a noumenal reality and the variety of its occurrences to a plurality of perceivers. Language, as developed in and through this phenomenal realm of experience, is then only able to apply literally to that realm. In order to refer to a noumenal realm of reality, mythological language must be used.<sup>13</sup> However, most religious adherents believe they speak literally of the noumenal Real when they assert something like “God is good”. For Hick literal and mythological are not mutually exclusive terms:

*“We speak mythologically about the noumenal Real by speaking literally or analogically about its phenomenal manifestations.”<sup>14</sup>*

This is because:

*“We have seen that all human awareness is in terms of meaning and that meaning always has a practical dispositional aspect: to be aware of a thing or a situation as having a particular meaning or character is to be in a dispositional state to behave in relation to it in ways that are (believed to be) appropriate to it having that character.*

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<sup>9</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, p241.

<sup>10</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, p240.

<sup>11</sup> Hick, John. 11th December 2002. Letter to Peter Heath, Box 23, Hick Archives.

<sup>12</sup> Ruston, Thomas William. 2016. “*The John Hick Papers: Religious Pluralism In The Archives*”. The Expository Times 128 (1): p9.

<sup>13</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, p350.

<sup>14</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, p351.

*And the function of mythology is to express the practical meaning of its referent by evoking in us an appropriate dispositional response.”<sup>15</sup>*

In other words, the content of religious language is concerned with indicating the disposition of a religious individual towards the noumenal Real, a phenomenological act, rather than the impossible task of defining the noumenal Real.

Both the ineffability and the ability to meaningfully talk about the transcendental Real are catered for within the theory. This is borne out in Hick’s adoption of the distinction between substantial and formal properties. Substantial properties such as ‘being all-knowing’, ‘being morally good’, and ‘being a fundamental force’ are all applicable to the phenomenal Real. Formal properties such as ‘being a referent of a term’ and ‘being beyond substantial properties’ are applicable or better, are appropriate for the noumenal Real.<sup>16</sup> Hence ineffability exists as a formal property of the noumenal Real, with any and every description from post-axial religious traditions categorised as proposed substantial properties of their tradition-specific phenomenal Real.

*“Using this distinction between the Real an sich and the Real as humanly thought-and-experienced, I want to explore the pluralistic hypothesis that the great world faiths embody different perceptions and conceptions of, and correspondingly different responses to, the Real from within the major variant ways of being human; and that within each of them the transformation of human existence from self-centredness to Reality-centredness is taking place. These traditions are accordingly to be regarded as alternative soteriological ‘spaces’ within which, or ‘ways’ along which, men and women can find salvation/liberation/ultimate fulfilment.”<sup>17</sup>*

So, if the phenomenal Real, the *Real an sich* Hick describes above, and the noumenal Real are indeed the same thing then this raises the issue of how the ineffability of the latter is not reflected in the former. Hick believes we are still able to make meaningful statements about the phenomenal Real by speaking indirectly and mythologically.<sup>18</sup> This relies on the interactive and reactive depiction of religious experience. This we will explore in closer detail in the subsequent parts of this section but first an introduction of the other pillar of Hick’s pluralism.

## Part 1.2 Soteriological Concern

*To what extent does a religious tradition hinder or promote a transformation of salvation/liberation?*

The reason for the pre/post axial distinction being as important as it is for Hick is because it is the definition of a post-axial tradition upon which his pluralism relies. If the function of post-axial religious traditions is to “create contexts within which the transformation of human existence from self-centredness to Reality-centredness can take place” then this is

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<sup>15</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, p351.

<sup>16</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, p239.

<sup>17</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, p239-40.

<sup>18</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, p350.

also the criterion by which their efficacy is judged.<sup>19</sup> Hick finds what this salvation/liberation transformation looks like by studying the various post-axial religious traditions and recognising the moral precepts which he believes is apparent in all of them in various articulations. In Chapter 17 of *Interpretation* Hick provides these articulations in detail but when distilled these equate to the golden rule; it is good to benefit others and bad to harm them:

*"In each case it begins on the common ground of fair dealing and respect for others' lives and property and leads on towards the higher ground of positive generosity, forgiveness, kindness, love, compassion, where we find the ethical evidence of the transformation of human existence from self-centredness to Reality-centredness."*<sup>20</sup>

There is more to say on this matter, but it is best understood in light of the criticism Hick received for assuming that the primary concern of the major religious traditions is their soteriology. These criticisms will form a significant part of the subsequent discourse on the shortcomings of Hick's pluralist hypothesis.

### Part 1.3 Conflicts and Disagreements

*Hick's pluralism is one that not only acknowledges but accounts for the discord between religious traditions and their adherents*

One of the consequences of religious diversity is conflict and disagreement due to multiple doctrines asserting multiple cosmologies and lifestyles. Again, Hick delineates between these different types of conflict by providing three categories; historical, trans-historical and ultimacy. Disagreements over historical claims are those for which the definitive answer is technically accessible to human observation at some time. These are what Hick denotes as the 'visible, audible and tangible constituents of past history'.<sup>21</sup> Whether or not these claims are indeed true or false sometimes becomes secondary when considering the status that these purported claims maintain within their religious tradition. For some religious adherents these claims are fundamental pillars of their faith and therefore not open to debate. For these people specifically, the pluralist hypothesis is an inaccessible fantasy. However, for a growing number of religious adherents these historical claims are not quintessential to their belief structure. It is to these people that Hick offers his religious pluralism.

Disagreements over trans-historical claims are those which in principle have a definitive answer but that answer is inaccessible because it cannot be verified with historical or empirical evidence. What happens, if anything, after someone dies? Some traditions claim a person is reincarnated, others that a another plain of existence awaits, and others again that there is nothing. Hick's response to the conflict surrounding these claims is much the same as that towards historical claims - the conflicting nature of these claims does not alter the salvific efficacy of each religious tradition and their own particularity. So, whilst there is

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<sup>19</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, p300.

<sup>20</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, p314.

<sup>21</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, p363.

indeed technically a correct answer to what happens to an individual after death, this answer is not pertinent to that same individual's ability to achieve salvation/liberation.

Disagreements over claims of ultimacy can be understood as those conflicts which occur around ultimate questions like the nature of the Real, the state of the universe, and the fate of the universe.<sup>22</sup> These are the questions that are the ultimate mysteries of human existence:

*"Where do we come from? What are we here for? Where are we going?, in response to which the religious traditions have developed their various mythologies. These mythic pictures are true in so far as the responses which they tend to elicit are in soteriological alignment with the Real... They therefore do not conflict with one another as would rival factual hypotheses."*<sup>23</sup>

Hick's advice then in light of these various levels of conflict is that:

*"We ought to then consider the total belief-systems of the different traditions, composed as they are of elements of diverse logical types: experiential reports, mythologies, historical and trans-historical affirmations, interpretive schemes and concepts of the ultimate."*<sup>24</sup>

When these religious traditions, including their elements mentioned above, are also understood for their use of ritual activities, ethical and lifestyle prescriptions, and social participation and orchestration we are left with complex temporal spiritual collectives. Each of these collectives mediating between its adherents and the noumenal Real through their phenomenal offerings; all more or less equally salvific.<sup>25</sup>

Hick also accounts for the conflict that arises out of the two broad categories into which most manifestations of the phenomenal Real can be placed. These are personae and impersonae; the Christian God and the Islamic Allah within the former and the Taoist Tao and Advaita Vedanta Brahman within the latter. One of these two vastly different ways of conceiving and registering with the phenomenal Real surely must negate the other. Not so for Hick; he likens these personae and impersonae manifestations to the different ways of conceiving and registering light:

*"The purely physical structure of light is not directly observable; but under different sets of experimental conditions it is found to have wave-like and particle-like properties respectively... The reality itself is such that it is able to be validly conceived and observed in both of these ways."*<sup>26</sup>

In this way the noumenal Real is not directly perceptible, but through *experiential* rather than experimental conditions, human beings are able to relate to it directly through the

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<sup>22</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, p363.

<sup>23</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, p375.

<sup>24</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, p374.

<sup>25</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, p375.

<sup>26</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, p245.



phenomenal Real. If this relating is in the mode of the I-Thou encounter, then naturally the phenomenal Real encountered is that of the personae. Conversely, when an individual relates in a mode of non-personal awakening then the phenomenal impersonae is manifest.<sup>27</sup>

Hick's religious pluralism, as mentioned previously, is one which is not acceptable to everyone. This is what we will explore in the second part of this section. Otherwise, the foundation of the pluralist hypothesis is relatively uncontroversial. Its ontology is one which posits the equally valid desires and claims of the world's religions and its ethics is one which holds that the key to salvation/liberation is the re-orientation of an individual from self-centredness to reality-centredness; a call to compassion. Next a brief detour before continuing onto the criticism of Hick's pluralism; it is important to note his genuine investment in the study of not only his home religion but other religious traditions as this informs the careful structuring of his pluralism.

#### Part 1.4 Hick on Buddhism

*What is on offer are optional conceptualities which are a skilful means of articulating religious experience*

So whilst Hick may have been known first as a Christian his wide ranging study of the world's religions was equally as known. One such example of this is his paper *Religion as 'Skilful Means': A Hint from Buddhism* in which he discusses the concept of *upaya* (or *upayakausalya*). Whilst this concept is not a central tenet of all forms of Buddhism it is practiced and taught on varying levels within enough of those forms to warrant a closer study.<sup>28</sup> And whilst this is not a central tenet of his pluralism, this paper is included to exhibit the applicability and compatibility of pluralism with a religious tradition outside of Hick's own.

The notion of *upaya* has and can be used in either a narrow or broad sense. The narrow meaning pertains to the skilful means by which a teacher leads a student or a group to some truth. This form of skilful means is characterised by the asking of leading questions so that the student or group may arrive at the truth themselves. This is because, whilst the teacher may know or be aware of a particular truth, declaring this knowledge is less skilful than guiding a student to their own understanding.<sup>29</sup> The broader meaning pertains to the use of mental objects, particular perspectives or any alignment of oneself with a particular thing. *Skilful means*, in the broader sense, is about not becoming too attached to the concepts we employ to navigate our lives.<sup>30</sup>

Hick touches on the concept of nirvana and asserts a personal preference. Namely his preference to speak not of an experience of nirvana but of a nirvanic experience. Nirvana is not an entity or place as the former might imply but is a state available to an 'experiencer'.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Hick, *Interpretation*, p245.

<sup>28</sup> Hick, John. 1991. "Religion As 'Skilful Means': A Hint From Buddhism". *International Journal For Philosophy Of Religion* 30 (3): 141.

<sup>29</sup> Hick, 'Religion as Skilful Means', p141.

<sup>30</sup> Hick, 'Religion as Skilful Means', p142.

<sup>31</sup> Hick, 'Religion as Skilful Means', p144.

Using his interpretation of the Pali Cannon, Hick's notion of nirvanic experience is characterised as:

*"a state of complete inner freedom, equilibrium, peace, lack of angst and a sense of being entirely 'at home' and unthreatened in the universe, which expresses itself both in a positive affective state and in compassion for all forms of life."*<sup>32</sup>

From this Hick accepts wholeheartedly that Gautama Buddha (Siddhattha Gotama in Pali) was home to a constantly manifesting nirvanic experience of reality. From this then, the Third Noble Truth - the possibility of the cessation of suffering - can be conceived of as a report of experience rather than a prescriptive theory.<sup>33</sup> By extension then, not only the third, but all four Noble Truths may be regarded in the same manner. This is certainly in alignment with the broader sense of the concept of *upaya*.

As Hick eloquently states:

*"All epistemic experience (experience that purports to be experience-of) involves the use of concepts which endow it with a meaning in terms of which we can behave appropriately in relation to that which is thus experienced. Our conceptual system is embodied in language, and the world as described is therefore always partially formed by the human experienter and language user."*<sup>34</sup>

The repercussions of such a statement is that it draws a line around and confirms the limitations of the human experience; that human awareness is necessarily confined by the human perspective. Hence, an intuition or experience of reality as it is, rather than from a human perspective, can never be expressed in any language. Hick suggests the only possible appropriate response would be silence.<sup>35</sup> In choosing to speak rather than to remain silent in declaring the Four Noble Truths, Gautama Buddha was employing skilful means in order to convey something about his experience of reality in language whilst aware of the insufficiency of that very language.

Hick then extends this to his own home religion. In classifying the Four Noble Truths as *upayic* he does so also with various elements of Christian doctrine. The deification of Jesus Christ, pictures of the afterlife in heaven, hell and purgatory as well as the doctrine of the church as the Body of Christ are all equally *upayic*. For Hick, because the human experience is exactly that, human, there are no eternal truths that one single religious tradition can provide. What is on offer are optional conceptualities which are a skilful means of articulating religious experience.<sup>36</sup> The reason why so many adherents of various religious traditions have a negative reaction to this statement is that as a society we have been entombed in the notion that the literal is more important than the figurative. The subsequent section on the workings of metaphor will be largely orientated to excavating ourselves from this restrictive idea. But first, we turn towards Hick's critics.

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<sup>32</sup> Hick, 'Religion as Skilful Means', p144.

<sup>33</sup> Hick, 'Religion as Skilful Means', p144.

<sup>34</sup> Hick, 'Religion as Skilful Means', p145.

<sup>35</sup> Hick, 'Religion as Skilful Means', p145.

<sup>36</sup> Hick, 'Religion as Skilful Means', p154.

## PART 2: Criticism of Hick's Pluralism

The most substantial part of this section is reserved for criticism of Hick's pluralism. First, we will explore the general problems that characterise the majority of Hick's critics and then move into case studies which highlight specific issues with the theory. The critiques incorporated here all serve a process of shedding and dismantling those parts of Hick's theory that are problematic. Whilst some criticism is relatively unwarranted and is easily resolved, other criticism is warranted and raises enduring issues for pluralism. Each are provided here to strengthen and reinforce the remaining aspects of Hick's pluralism we will carry into the final section.

### Part 2.1: General Problems

As mentioned previously, these problems are ones that most opponents of Hick would agree with. This is by no means an exhaustive list; some of these will be covered in greater detail in Parts 2.2 to Part 2.5. The inclusion of these particular problems is in their getting to the centre of Hick's pluralism and the issues that arise from the positions he must take for its assertion.

#### Pluralism as Coercion

*How tolerant really is a pluralist position when it comes against an opposing argument?*

Pluralism presupposes liberalism; specifically an ideology which values compromise and the evolution of traditional convictions. This isn't inherently wrong however with this presupposition in mind, pluralism arguably contains an element of coercion. It requires a shift in understanding by most religious individuals.<sup>37</sup> In light of this, pluralism faces opposition from inclusivism and exclusivism, with both able to make the point that their particular attitudes towards religious diversity are equally accessible to any and all religious traditions. They may regard each other as fundamentally wrong but this does not diminish the entitlement of each religion to believe itself to be uniquely correct.<sup>38</sup>

Peter Donovan does provide a delineation between different types of pluralism. Namely, the pluralist approach to religious diversity grounded in epistemic and methodological motivations is different from those approaches defined by a prescriptive form theology or ideology.<sup>39</sup> It is this second approach that he takes issue with and hence the inclusion of his criticism in this section.

Theologically driven pluralisms like Hick's rely on a seemingly self-appointed superior reference point upon which different religious traditions are measured against and through. It is hard to assert the superior reference point of one's own theory when a key condition of said theory is there is no superior reference point. Why pluralism may be a form of

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<sup>37</sup> Donovan, Peter. 1993. "The Intolerance Of Religious Pluralism". Religious Studies 29 (2): p218.

<sup>38</sup> Donovan, *Intolerance of Religious Pluralism*, p219.

<sup>39</sup> Donovan, *Intolerance of Religious Pluralism*, p227.

exclusivism; specifically how hard it is to maintain both pluralistic tolerance and the assertion that there is one true understanding of faith we will explore in more detail with Jonathan L. Kvanvig shortly.

### Conflicting Religious Experiences

*If a believer is capable of their own religious interpretations of the world they must accept that other believers may have other different and sometimes conflicting interpretations*

In 1990 Timothy R. Stinnett published his *John Hick's Pluralistic Theory of Religion* in response to Hick's own *Interpretation* a year prior. In this paper he breaks Hick's theory down to its baseline presuppositions and implications. The full paper is a comprehensive attempt to dismantle Hick's theory and deserves unabridged reading. However, from Stinnett we will take by example his first two perceived presuppositions of Hick's pluralism:

*"P1: The religions are not completely delusory but are at least partially veridical responses to ultimate reality.*

*P2: The world is systematically ambiguous for religious interpretations. The "facts" are compatible with religious and "naturalistic" interpretations."*<sup>40</sup>

The first presupposition is a bold claim because it operates as an assumption. There is no explicit evidence for this claim and therefore cannot be settled by argument.<sup>41</sup> This is generally what Hick has acknowledged in his description of his theory being a *religious* philosophy of religion. By extension, because of the assumptive nature of the first presupposition the onus is not on Hick to validate this statement but rather to elucidate the boundaries and conditions within which such an assumption is rationally adopted.<sup>42</sup> A further consequence of Hick taking this route is that a separate and second onus is placed on Hick's critics not only to disprove Hick's theory but to also provide a more rational and equally comprehensive alternative.

As previously stated, the first presupposition is one which Hick denotes as the basic religious conviction in which his theory of religious pluralism rests. It is a choice to interpret the world religiously. This basic religious conviction is born in an adoption of a specific religious tradition. This basic religious conviction is one which is available to every individual and every religious tradition. In other words, if this conviction can be applied to one religion it is applicable to each and every.<sup>43</sup> In response, Stinnett submits a criticism analogous to that of many other critics: If a believer is capable of their own religious interpretations of the world they must accept that other believers may have other different and sometimes conflicting interpretations. Further, there are literally billions of these other interpretations; this is not only a rational but an expected ground to doubt one's own interpretation.<sup>44</sup> How a religious adherent may therefore commit fully to their own religious beliefs whilst also maintain their pluralism remains an unsurmountable task for Stinnett.

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<sup>40</sup> Stinnett, Timothy R. 1990. "John Hick's Pluralistic Theory Of Religion". The Journal Of Religion 70 (4): p572.

<sup>41</sup> Stinnett, *Hick's Pluralistic Theory*, p572.

<sup>42</sup> Stinnett, *Hick's Pluralistic Theory*, p572.

<sup>43</sup> Stinnett, *Hick's Pluralistic Theory*, p572.

<sup>44</sup> Stinnett, *Hick's Pluralistic Theory*, p581.

The second presupposition is that in order to evaluate the correctness of a religious claim or assertion of the world, one must first make the cognitive choice to interpret the world religiously. In this way Presuppositions One and Two are irrefutably linked. As Stinnett claims; “this does not amount to “proof” but to a rejection of proof as impossible.”<sup>45</sup>

This second presupposition is based on Hick’s own theory of epistemology. Namely, that there are three layers of meaning which can be inferred from the world in which we inhabit. A natural, a socio-ethical and moral, and a religious level. The first is the physical meaning of the environment, involving basic meanings in order to comprehend and move safely through the world around us. The second is the level at which we perceive and ascribe meaning to the recognition that there are others who move through this world like us. At the third level both the first and second level of meaning are granted significance whilst also inhabiting the world as an environment either mediating, moderating or manifesting the ultimate Real.<sup>46</sup>

There is an expansion of cognitive freedom exercised which occurs with the deepening of each layer of meaning. This is of import because what Hick asserts is that religious cognition is not separate from and therefore uniquely different than other modes of cognition but rather, like those other modes, inhabits a hierarchy in a similar fashion.<sup>47</sup>

Before continuing; substituting the term *religious level* for *spiritual level* is appropriate. This is an important distinction as it delineates between the metaphysical aspect of experienced reality as existing prior to any religious tradition. It also accounts for individuals who assert they have had phenomenal experiences of the transcendental Real outside of a specific religion. Still, religious traditions are certainly the most popular ways in which to access and ascribe the meaning Hick refers to in his epistemology.

### Pluralism as Exclusivism

*“When one holds that the rites of religion X are correct in a pluralistic way, one is reformulating or reconstructing X in light of the metaphysics on the basis of which one holds one’s pluralism”<sup>48</sup>*

The ultimate task of the pluralist is to show how apparently inconsistent religious beliefs are indeed consistent while also providing a unifying account of the diversity of religious belief. This account needs to both explain the existence of competing religious beliefs and be compatible with other constructions of religious understanding.<sup>49</sup> For many of Hick’s critics this is something that he simply fails to do. Pluralism as a form of exclusivism is a topic we will explore in more depth with Gavin D’Costa in Part 2.2 but an introduction of the issue here will hopefully develop a familiarity useful for subsequent discourse. Pluralistic theories, not only Hick’s, are expounded as being theories motivated by a pragmatic approach to explaining how multiple religions exist. Further, a preference is developed for the practice of compassion towards others, a tenet of most religious traditions. This emphasis can lead to

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<sup>45</sup> Stinnett, *Hick’s Pluralistic Theory*, p573.

<sup>46</sup> Stinnett, *Hick’s Pluralistic Theory*, p574.

<sup>47</sup> Stinnett, *Hick’s Pluralistic Theory*, p574.

<sup>48</sup> Aikin, Scott F., and Jason Aleksander. 2012. “*Nicholas Of Cusa’S De Pace Fidei And The Meta-Exclusivism Of Religious Pluralism*”. *International Journal For Philosophy Of Religion* 74 (2): p228.

<sup>49</sup> Aikin and Aleksander, *Meta-Exclusivism*, p231.

the dampening of the doctrinal or epistemological demands that any of those traditions may require of its adherents.<sup>50</sup> This prescriptive element is what critiques rely on to draw attention to the exclusivist foundations of pluralism.

For critics, this is pluralism's fundamental weakness. They are unable to bear their practical commitments to toleration of religious difference because of this preference for a specific part of religious traditions.<sup>51</sup> It is a noble part to be sure; but it is not the concept specifically which is the cause of the issue but the preference for that concept and the problems that preference causes for the pluralist. Whilst Hick promotes the second-order nature of his pluralism, it is still a form of exclusivism in that second-order. It is possible to assert that two apparently inconsistent religions are indeed both true. This is achieved in the revision of those traditions through the lens of pluralism; which at this point essentially becomes a third theology that supervenes on the previous two.<sup>52</sup>

The issue of compatibility between religious belief and pluralism is in the dissonance between the first order commitment of the religious believer and the second order commitment of the pluralist. The exclusive nature of the second order belief that all religions are valid reactions to the singular ultimate Real runs in direct contradiction to the assertion of many religious traditions that they themselves are the singular reaction to their singular ultimate Real. The irony is that a pluralist theory of religious diversity is incompatible not only with the views of inclusivists and exclusivists, but also with other pluralists.

Scott F. Aikin and Jason Aleksander offer in their paper *Nicholas of Cusa's De Pace Fidei and the Meta-Exclusivism of Religious Pluralism* a similar concern. The number of traditions that Hick designates as possible religions is such a broad one, assuming a practice of tolerance becomes radically thin in order to accommodate the extreme amount of diversity.<sup>53</sup> A Hickian response to this would be that his pluralism makes efforts to reduce the scope of this category. To maintain that Hick refers to accommodating all religions is a misunderstanding of the pluralist stance. Hick sets out clear conditions for the delineation between 'right' and 'wrong' religions. Namely, those religions which are right are those who guide their adherents from a self-centred to a reality-centred orientation.

A concern from Aikin and Aleksander which I do believe to have a staying impact on Hick's pluralism however is the question regarding the efficacy of pushing ethico-political objectives within a theological framework. The central need for tolerance may more likely be achievable outside of a specific theology.<sup>54</sup> It seems that the pluralist approach to resolving conflict is:

*"...achieved by liberalizing their theologies instead of finding independent reasons to liberalize their politics. [Why not] provide a political justification for religious concord than... provide a theological justification for peaceful politics."*<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Aikin and Aleksander, *Meta-Exclusivism*, p220.

<sup>51</sup> Aikin and Aleksander, *Meta-Exclusivism*, p221.

<sup>52</sup> Aikin and Aleksander, *Meta-Exclusivism*, p228.

<sup>53</sup> Aikin and Aleksander, *Meta-Exclusivism*, p232.

<sup>54</sup> Aikin and Aleksander, *Meta-Exclusivism*, p234.

<sup>55</sup> Aikin and Aleksander, *Meta-Exclusivism*, p234.

## Part 2.2 Owen Anderson and Questionable Presuppositions

*When taken to their logical end point do the presuppositions within Hick's pluralism actually count against him?*

In his paper *The Presuppositions of Religious Pluralism and the Need for Natural Theology* Owen Anderson takes a distinct approach to his examination of the pluralist's stance. His engagement with Hick's pluralism is two-fold. The first half of the article asserts four primary presuppositions of Hick's theory. The second half takes those same presuppositions, extends them to their logical end point, and then uses these conclusions to pivot away from Hick's pluralism in favour of his own form of rational exclusivism. In other words, a strategic reaffirmation which transitions to a refutation using the same core principles. These presuppositions are the following:

- i.) The ought/can principle
- ii.) The universality of religious experience
- iii.) The universality of redemptive change
- iv.) A view of how the Eternal would do things<sup>56</sup>

The ought/can principle is the relationship between what is required of a person versus that person's ability. If a person ought to do something then they must be capable of doing it; if a person cannot do something they cannot be required to do it.<sup>57</sup> Anderson provides Christianity as an example. If the Christian salvation is the only salvation then this is an unfair demand because not every person that has ever been or will be has been present during the time that Christianity has been a doctrine. Those people cannot be required to subscribe to a doctrine that never existed. This relates specifically to Hick's pluralism in that achieving salvation is something that all people ought to achieve. This salvation therefore cannot be restricted to one religion because the temporal and geographical restrictions of that religion would mean the inability for the majority of people to achieve salvation.

Hick's pluralism is one of ambiguity. If more than one religion is capable of providing salvation, then a level of ambiguity is placed on the devotion to those religions. There is no motivating reason for a person to select one or the other or the other. This ambiguity for Anderson is a violation of the ought/can principle.<sup>58</sup> If religious devotion is simply a case of proximity then the burden of what a person is capable of no longer resides with them but rather with a random assignment of a temporal and geographical location. And this assignment does make a difference. Most post-axial religions look different to how we believe them to have first started, to say nothing of the intra-religious schisms that all possess.

The second presupposition is the universality of religious experience. For Hick this experience is that of the transcendent Real and therefore not limited to those of one

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Anderson, Owen. 2008. "The Presuppositions Of Religious Pluralism And The Need For Natural Theology". *Sophia* 47 (2): p201.

<sup>57</sup> Anderson, *Presuppositions of Religious Pluralism*, p204.

<sup>58</sup> Anderson, *Presuppositions of Religious Pluralism*, p208.

religion. For Hick what unifies all people, regardless of the nature of any one person's specific experience, is that the experience exists in the first place. The import is placed therefore on the religious experience itself rather than how the experience manifests. For Anderson this presupposition relies on a preference that is based on a circular argument. Pluralism values a religious interpretation of religious experience over a naturalistic one. This preference requires knowledge that the transcendental Real exists. This knowledge cannot be based on religious experience otherwise it defaults to circularity.<sup>59</sup> For Anderson the issue isn't the universality of religious experience but the preference for religious interpretation which makes that universality possible.

The third and fourth presuppositions are interrelated. Redemptive change is the core of all post-axial religions and the specific view of how the Eternal would do things. Briefly, whilst 'do things' implies a personae interpretation of the Real, this can be interchanged with an impersonae interpretation like "how the Eternal would be in alignment with or reflective of". I think Anderson uses the personae interpretation here because he is alluding to Hick's Christian background in the formation of his pluralism. Subsequently, the specific view of how the Eternal would do things for Hick is the belief that God is loving and therefore God must behave in a way that is in alignment with that loving nature.<sup>60</sup> Again, Anderson takes issue with the liberties that Hick takes with defining the nature of the transcendent Real. Naturally the characteristic of loving would be high on the lists of the majority of Christians but another relatively popular characteristic is justness. From this, questions regarding the demands of love and justice and whether they can always be reconciled and pulled into alignment arise. To say God is loving is to rely on one aspect whilst ignoring others.<sup>61</sup>

However, here there is an issue of Anderson taking the presuppositions of Hick's pluralism and treating them as the concrete foundations of a theology, instead of a cautious hypothesis for why the world is as religiously diverse as it is. Hick has never asserted that his pluralism is specifically the correct way of viewing the world; rather, it is a proffering of the most likely explanation. This means that to critique these four core presuppositions for being exactly that, presuppositions, is simply stating that which has already been said by Hick himself. The underlying issues that Anderson draws attention to in his critique are worth exploring, and will be explored in the following segments. But to be presented with a sand castle and then to simply criticise it for not using a steel framework misses the point of its construction.

### Part 2.3: Gavin D'Costa on Criteria and Agnosticism

*A religious pluralist, whilst maintaining that all religions are distinct reactions to the Transcendental Real, only passively rejects alternative theories of religious diversity*

An issue that Gavin D'Costa, like many, has taken with Hick's pluralism is how it seems to operate from the same position as most theories of exclusivism. For pluralism to work there must be a proposed schemata for how religious diversity could exist considering the exclusivist claims made by many of those religions. This schemata has a proposed criteria for

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<sup>59</sup> Anderson, *Presuppositions of Religious Pluralism*, p208.

<sup>60</sup> Anderson, *Presuppositions of Religious Pluralism*, p205.

<sup>61</sup> Anderson, *Presuppositions of Religious Pluralism*, p209.



how to understand the relationship between different religions, as well as the relationship between those religions and the transcendental Real they believe to be responding to. If an understanding of religion or religious diversity were to differ from this criteria then it would be considered false. In drawing the line between what is a true understanding and what is a false understanding, the pluralist becomes an exclusivist.<sup>62</sup>

What does this mean specifically for Hick's pluralism? Hick's particular schemata is based on a religion's ability to re-orientate its adherents from a self-centred view of the world to a reality-centred one. If this is the religion's main objective then they are true. A religion is considered false in their belief if they claim a final or ultimate knowledge in the transcendent Real and by extension condemn the claims of other religions in light of their own alethic superiority.<sup>63</sup> The justification for the criterion itself is what Hick terms a basic moral insight based on The Golden Rule. It stems from the basic moral consensus of all popular post-axial religious traditions.<sup>64</sup>

Conversely, D'Costa's interpretation of this criteria is that it is grounded in Hick's assertion that a loving God who desires the salvation of all human beings would only allow a world in which it was possible for all human beings to gain said salvation.<sup>65</sup> This particular observation is unfounded specifically because it doesn't acknowledge the evolution that Hick went through personally as a philosopher and therefore, by extension, his theory of religious pluralism. D'Costa gives reference to *God and the Universe of Faiths* and *Death and Eternal Life*, published in '73 and '76 respectively, and *An Interpretation of Religion*, first published in '89; all apparently supporting his interpretation of Hick's theory. In those thirteen years Hick abandoned the evangelical basis of his pluralism for a harder reliance on Kant's phenomenal/noumenal distinction and none of that evangelical basis is mentioned in *Interpretation*. So whilst it was true that at one point Hick's theory was reliant on a particular image of God, that was no longer the case by the time *Interpretation* was published.

Hick concedes that religious pluralists do maintain a criteria; namely, for what constitutes a religion. This criterion is whether a tradition exemplifies the salvific effort of re-orientating its adherents from a self-centred experience of the world to a new reality-centred experience with the Transcendent Real as its focus.<sup>66</sup> Hick's response to D'Costa in this regard is that the use of a criteria as indicative of exclusivism is a slippery slope. If this claim is to be followed then:

*"In this trivial and misleading sense one is an exclusivist when one admires Mahatma Gandhi and the Dalai Lama but condemns Hitler and Stalin; or when an umpire declares a foul in football; or even when one distinguishes between left and right, or night and day, or makes such an innocent statement as that it is raining! For to make*

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<sup>62</sup> D'Costa, Gavin. 1996. "The Impossibility of a Pluralist View of Religions". Religious Studies 32 (2): p226.

<sup>63</sup> D'Costa, *Impossibility of a Pluralist View*, p227.

<sup>64</sup> Hick, *The Possibility Of Religious Pluralism: A Reply To Gavin D'Costa*, p164.

<sup>65</sup> D'Costa, *Impossibility of a Pluralist View*, p228.

<sup>66</sup> Hick, *The Possibility Of Religious Pluralism: A Reply To Gavin D'Costa*, p162.

an assertion about anything is to deny its contrary, and to propose a theory or view about anything is to reject alternative views.”<sup>67</sup> [emphasis in non-italics added]

Now there is an issue with Hick’s response: in defending his criteria he moves into a different category of examples in order to justify his own theory. The delineation between the Dalai Lama and Hitler, between offside and not offside and between night and day are all easily made (some referees notwithstanding). This is because of the empirical physical evidence that we can use to clarify those delineations. Religious traditions whilst manifestly physical are also concerned with the metaphysical. Evidencing a delineation is a more complex task. However, this complexity is not found in simply asserting that pluralism is a form of exclusivism.

Where complexity can be claimed and therefore a line between pluralism and exclusivism also, is in how the two theories are asserted. Naturally, Hick is correct in that any assertion is an implicit denial of the contrary. This rejection however, can be active or passive. An active rejection is one in which the rejection of the alternative is a core component of the assertion itself. A passive rejection is therefore one in which the denial of the alternative is a by-product of the original claim. So, in this instance an essential trait of the religious exclusivist is not only that their religion is the one true way but that all others are wrong. Alternatively, a religious pluralist, whilst maintaining that all religions are distinct reactions to the Transcendental Real, only passively rejects alternative theories of religious diversity.

This is reaffirmed by Hick himself later in his reply to D’Costa when he makes his own distinction between religious exclusivism and pluralism. Namely, the two theories have two separate logical foundations: the former is a self-committing affirmation of faith with the latter being a philosophical hypothesis.<sup>68</sup> A suitable addendum to this would be that whilst religious pluralism is a philosophical hypothesis, Hick’s pluralism has some of its foundations in his own religiosity and so therefore is not quite as distant as he would claim. Nevertheless, pluralism, by Hick’s definition, is not another historically placed religious tradition asserting its singular dominance but a theory about the relationship between those traditions.

With these complexities of delineating between pluralism and exclusivism we now turn to another point of contention - Hick’s adoption of Kant’s delineation. The phenomenal/noumenal distinction that Hick adopts creates an attitude D’Costa coins *transcendental agnosticism*.<sup>69</sup> That is, that one cannot know the true nature of the transcendental Real, only that there is indeed a truth beyond one’s understanding. This component of Hick’s religious pluralism is itself a weighty assertion, and one which D’Costa questions. In order for his theory to work Hick must know this characteristic of ineffability to be true. Hick’s response is that he doesn’t. Religious pluralism, whilst comprehensive, is nonetheless still only a hypothesis, a theory which attempts to explain not only the religious diversity present in the world but how different religions seem to be equally

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<sup>67</sup> Hick, *The Possibility Of Religious Pluralism: A Reply To Gavin D’Costa*, p162.

<sup>68</sup> Hick, *The Possibility Of Religious Pluralism: A Reply To Gavin D’Costa*, p163.

<sup>69</sup> D’Costa, *Impossibility of a Pluralist View*, p228.

effective, and sometimes ineffective, paths to the salvific reorientation of human experience.<sup>70</sup>

Nonetheless, in making this distinction Hick asserts that no one phenomenal interpretation of the transcendent Real is any more correct than another. This has consequences for Hick as his own interpretation of the noumenal transcendental Real, his pluralism, could be construed as just another phenomenal one among many with no prominence to assert. Therefore his assertion, while not as prominent as in his early work, that the Real is all loving and desires salvation for all individuals, becomes no more true than the Real being an ultimate state in which the ego dissolves utterly and pure consciousness is manifested.

For D'Costa this means that in Hick's leveling of the playing field, both interpretations relinquish any cognitive purchase. Instead they can only be considered useful in their ability to shape attitudes and behaviours which lead to a salvific orientation. So when it comes to ontological claims concerning the transcendental Real, agnosticism is the only viable option.<sup>71</sup> To come full circle, this apparent need for transcendental agnosticism within Hick's pluralism only goes to further the argument that the theory is itself a form of exclusivism. Any view or understanding that runs in contradiction to this agnosticism is considered false. For example, if the agnostic approach is that the noumenal Real cannot be known but a religion claims to have the true transcendental Real revealed within its tradition then those claims are false.<sup>72</sup> These claims are subsequently labelled as mythical; not literally true but containing an educational significance; an assertion that many religious adherents would claim contradicts their own self-understanding.

## Part 2.4: Kvanvig and the Pluralist's Religious Quandary

*In order for a pluralist to be a true religious adherent, their pluralism has to be left behind*

In his article *Religious Pluralism and The Buridan's Ass Paradox*, Jonathan L. Kvanvig examines whether or not it is possible for an individual to hold both a pluralist stance and religious beliefs. He does this by co-opting John Buridan's eponymous conundrum.

The Buridan's Ass Paradox presents a hungry donkey set before two seemingly identical bales of hay, each equidistant. The paradox is in how to explain why the donkey may choose one bale over the other. This parallels Kvanvig's primary concern with Hick's pluralism: If more than one religion offers an equally salvific path why would an individual choose the Buddhist Bale over the Christian Bale?

For Kvanvig it is a matter of classifying the rationality of actions. He offers the categories of rational, irrational, and non-rational. Where most would only deem the first two necessary, Kvanvig includes the third so that arbitrary actions aren't given the same status as those actions easily placed within the rational category.<sup>73</sup> Here arbitrary actions are those in which

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<sup>70</sup> Hick, *The Possibility Of Religious Pluralism: A Reply To Gavin D'Costa*, p163.

<sup>71</sup> D'Costa, *Impossibility of a Pluralist View*, p229.

<sup>72</sup> D'Costa, *Impossibility of a Pluralist View*, p229.

<sup>73</sup> Kvanvig, Jonathan L. 2009. "Religious Pluralism And The Buridan's Ass Paradox". *European Journal For Philosophy Of Religion* 1 (1): p8.

no reason can be found for the preference of one option over another. This third category is where Buridan's ass and Kvanvig's religious individual reside.

A natural reaction to this initial comparison is the false equivalency drawn between the situation the donkey finds itself in compared to the individual and their desire to become a religious adherent. The choice presented to the donkey is not the same choice placed in front of the individual. Becoming an adherent of any religion requires more than just choosing to say particular words or perform particular actions. A quintessential component of any religious tradition is the cognitive commitment to that tradition; a commitment to the truth that it presents.<sup>74</sup> Once this component of cognitive commitment is acknowledged, the language of choice is no longer properly representative of the individual and their religious quandary. This is explained in Kvanvig's scenario:

*"I am sitting in a coffee shop and look up, and come to the view that my friend Robert has just arrived. To say that I looked up, considered the possibilities and chose to view the situation as one involving Robert's presence is thoroughly wrongheaded. In this case, no choice of any sort was involved. Instead, the belief resulted because of perception, and the process involved is of a general causal sort. Any reconstruction in terms of the language of choice would be mistaken."*<sup>75</sup>

So whilst Hick's theory is one which values both the interactive and reactive aspects of religious experience, most religious traditions through both interacting and reacting with the noumenal Real have reached an internal consensus and established dogma. This dogma then combines its religious tradition's alethic and salvific adequacy to the extent that in order for an adherent to receive salvation they must accept that tradition and its teachings as irrevocably true.

This isn't necessarily an issue for all individuals facing this religious quandary. For some, it may just be a case of making a cognitive commitment to a particular religious tradition and being open to the interactive and reactive journey that that commitment entails. Not so paradoxical. The average individual is not of concern to Kvanvig; rather, it is the pluralist that is the ass. In other words, how can someone in Hick's shoes maintain both a pluralist stance on religious diversity and make a cognitive commitment to the irrevocable truth of one religious tradition and resolve their religious quandary?<sup>76</sup> If anything, the pluralist is in even deeper trouble than the donkey. To stop from starving, the donkey need only make the decision of which bale to eat from irrespective of whether ultimately that decision is rational, irrational or nonrational. It seems that the pluralist needs to do more than this to commit to a particular religious tradition.

Fortunately, Kvanvig's paper performs the role of both call and response. His answer is the addition of another form of cognitive interaction. If choosing is not enough and believing compromises the pluralist stance then perhaps acceptance is an avenue worth exploring.<sup>77</sup> Here, to accept a proposition is to assent to the truth of the proposition. Through this

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<sup>74</sup> Kvanvig, *Buridan's Ass Paradox*, p12.

<sup>75</sup> Kvanvig, *Buridan's Ass Paradox*, p12.

<sup>76</sup> Kvanvig, *Buridan's Ass Paradox*, p16.

<sup>77</sup> Kvanvig, *Buridan's Ass Paradox*, p19.

understanding, cognitive commitments are not comprised of beliefs but of acceptances. An issue being that most religious language uses and teaches on the concept of belief, but this can be equated to a misdiagnosis; when an adherent says they believe in the Christian God they mean they accept the Christian God. Admittedly, this is slightly revisionist, but only in the realignment of a concept, better than a radical shift in self-understanding.

Shifting from belief to acceptance as the basis for cognitive commitment is a pluralist response because it reflects the balance between interaction and reaction. It makes cognitive commitment more voluntary than if characterised by belief. This voluntary nature is what realigns the pluralist and their religious quandary with the hungry donkey. If acceptance is the key to commitment then, like the donkey, it is of no ultimate consequence what the reason is for the selection, it is a matter of action. As Kvanvig states “one can’t have rational beliefs without being in a position to rule out known competing alternatives whereas one can have rational actions even in the face of such alternatives”.<sup>78</sup> In other words, because of the voluntary nature of action that is not present in belief, actions can be arbitrary in a way that beliefs cannot replicate.

Still, this technically does not solve the religious quandary faced by the pluralist. To accept a religious tradition is to accept its teachings and its irrevocable truth. With belief as the action indicative of cognitive commitment, religious tradition is the evaluator of truth. With acceptance as the cognitive commitment, the individual and the religious tradition together are the evaluators of truth. Whichever side you fall on, each of these carry a truth that is incompatible with the pluralist understanding of religious diversity. For Kvanvig, pluralism is simply not portable. In order to take a step towards a religious bale, one’s pluralism has to be left behind. So Kvanvig’s transition from belief to acceptance is not a pluralist solution to the pluralist’s religious quandary but a way of avoiding the quandary by abandoning the part of the equation which makes it impossible.<sup>79</sup> Hick touches on this issue in a reply to a similar complaint lodged by Kevin Meeker. For him it is possible to be an adherent of a religious tradition whilst also maintaining a pluralist stance. The former is a first-order confession of adherence to a particular religious tradition with the latter being a second-order philosophy concerning the coexistence of the different forms of religious belief present in each religious tradition.<sup>80</sup> Whether or not this would satisfy Kvanvig is for another time and thesis.

## PART 3: Alternatives to Hick’s Pluralism

Up until this point this section has nearly exclusively dealt with Hick and his critics. Now we turn to some alternative forms of pluralism. Namely, contributions from Seyed Hassan Hosseini, Xin Mao and Peter Byrne. For anyone who has read around the discourse concerning pluralism this list has some glaring omissions. Notable theologians like Paul Knitter or George Lindbeck have made seismic semantic contributions to the field. The three contributions have been selected firstly because of how they stand in contrast to Hick’s

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<sup>78</sup> Kvanvig, *Buridan's Ass Paradox*, p20.

<sup>79</sup> Kvanvig, *Buridan's Ass Paradox*, p26.

<sup>80</sup> Hick, *Exclusivism Versus Pluralism*, p208.

theory and secondly the opportunity for a refinement of Hick's pluralism that such a juxtaposition provides.

### Part 3.1 Seyed Hassan Hosseini and Truthful Pluralism

*The important distinction between a philosophy of religion and a theology of religion.*

Hosseini's issue with Hick is that the importance of religious language that Hick's theory promotes is incongruent with the theory's implication that the same language is meaningless; considering the religious statements of which it is comprised are "human products of experience-based perceptions".<sup>81</sup> In response to this, Hosseini's own pluralism is one in which the truthfulness or alethic validity of each form of religious expression is maintained whilst also accounting for the diversity of those expressions. Essentially:

*"Religion is considered as the unique nature of the Real, and as the Real manifests itself in diverse and real worlds, the uniqueness of religion is also instantiated in different forms of faiths and revelations."*<sup>82</sup>

If we were to maintain Hick's phenomenal/noumenal distinction what Hosseini does is take the noumenal Real and deny, in one sense, its ineffability. An ultimate divine reality which supervenes different equally divine manifestations. With Hosseini's theory the diverse range of religious expression is accounted for whilst maintaining the self-understanding of truthfulness that each tradition holds. This maintaining of truthfulness is what allows religious statements to be cognitively meaningful and not just metaphors or symbols.

With Hosseini's pluralism, the Real is not an ineffable divine nor is religion simply a human reaction to that presence. The Real is absolutely real and present in the world in a myriad of ways, with each religion a true manifestation of that Real. Within any of the many manifestations of this absolute there is the opportunity for determinations of the Real to appear. This is the Qur'an in Islam, Jesus in Christianity or the Buddha in Buddhism. Each of these appear as the absolute Real without being specifically the absolute Real.<sup>83</sup>

This is an unclear distinction. It seems that Hosseini has created a distinction between two forms of noumenal reality; the noumenal Real and a sub-noumenal Real. The Real as absolute exists and is equally manifested in the world's religions. This is an attempt to preserve the self-understanding of each religious tradition. Hosseini does this by maintaining each tradition's own truth while adding a supervening truth.

Here religious experience exists in what Hosseini calls 'a particular spiritual universe' and its origin is of the Real rather than human.<sup>84</sup> This theory maintains the truthful uniqueness of religion as well as its diversity in the parsing of the noumenal and sub-noumenal. The Real as a relative absolute:

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<sup>81</sup> Hosseini, Seyed Hassan. 2010. "Religious Pluralism And Pluralistic Religion: John Hick'S Epistemological Foundation Of Religious Pluralism And An Explanation Of Islamic Epistemology Toward Diversity Of Unique Religion". The Pluralist 5 (1): p102.

<sup>82</sup> Hosseini, *Diversity of Unique Religion*, p104.

<sup>83</sup> Hosseini, *Diversity of Unique Religion*, p108.

<sup>84</sup> Hosseini, *Diversity of Unique Religion*, p104.

*"As the Real manifests itself in different forms, and since religion under this assumption is perfectly divine, all religions are considered diverse crystallizations of the ultimate divine religion, and consequently, the uniqueness of Religion and the plurality of faiths are not only contrary, but also integral to each other, since diversity is intended and willed by God."*<sup>85</sup>

There are problems with this particular brand of pluralism. Firstly, Hosseini's issue with metaphors and symbols betrays the importance we as a global society place on literal language over metaphorical language. Certainly, literal language is easier and therefore perhaps more appropriate to use in many situations. However when we start to talk of things that are not solely of a physical nature we need language that can not only represent but reflect those things. More on this in Section III: Metaphor. The second problem of this pluralism is the theological foundations upon which it is built. Hick's pluralism is one undeniably informed by his own Christianity. However it acknowledges the interaction between the mundane and the divine, between the human and the Real.

In the above quote from Hosseini the will of God is mentioned, and this is not the only time it is referred to in the article; in fact, it appears quite frequently. So whilst Hosseini is employing philosophical language there is an issue of what field these theories exist in. Hick's pluralism is a self-confessed religious *philosophy* of religion; Hosseini's pluralism is a *theology* of a multiply-manifested religion.

### Part 3.2 Xin Mao and Other-Centredness

*Making a slight alteration to Hick's terminology and the improvement it represents*

Another departure from Hick's pluralism is found in Xin Mao's application of the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. Specifically, the synthesis that Mao achieves in taking the centrality of ethics characteristic of a 'levinasian' approach and framing it within Hick's salvation schemata. In replacing a core component of Hick's version of salvation; of turning from self-centredness to reality-centredness, Mao calls for a transformation of self-centredness to other-centredness. As Mao states, the goal is that "messianic peace would take the place of ultimate Reality as the teleological value underpinning religious pluralism".<sup>86</sup>

In going about such a replacement the first step is to recognise what already exists in Hick's theory. There is already a strong element of ethics in Hick's form of salvation. The salvific event of an individual becoming reality-centred is one characterised by a greater care and investment in not only their own life but equally or even more so in the lives of others and the universe at large. In moving away from reality-centredness to other-centredness Mao shifts the focus away from questions regarding the nature of an ultimate Real, instead placing it in how individuals treat each other in the first meaning of 'other' as well as investment in the metaphysical other, the second meaning.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Hosseini, *Diversity of Unique Religion*, p107-8.

<sup>86</sup> Mao, Xin. 2018. "Transformation From Real-Centredness To Other-Centredness: A Levinasian Re-Appraisal Of John Hick'S Religious Pluralism". *Religions* 9 (9): p1.

<sup>87</sup> Mao, *Levinasian Re-Appraisal of Hick*, p4.

This transition towards otherness means that salvation would not necessarily lead towards the noumenal Real but to what Levinas termed 'messianic peace'.<sup>88</sup>

Traditionally Hick's re-orientation towards reality-centredness seems to intrinsically carry more theological weight than simple other-centredness. Here Mao asserts an emphasis has to be placed on the opportunity for infinite transcendence in the re-orientation towards the other. Specifically, the introduction of the other as a transcendent concept with a quintessential ethical component.<sup>89</sup> In other words, the metaphysical second meaning of the term *otherness*. This is not an entirely alien concept; branches of mysticism in different religious traditions have presented concepts regarding divine otherness.

Hick's pluralism has one of its foundations in a particular type of soteriological journey - the re-orientation towards the Real. Whilst this journey is one which fits the mould of many religious traditions it is still a singular prescriptive articulation of salvation. Thus it runs the risk, like other aspects of Hick's theory, of being criticised for its implied exclusivism. Replies to this critique have been voiced in previous parts of this section but it is included here also because the development of Mao's salvation is in part a response to this critique.

In the modern world, information about other religious traditions is easily accessible, with not only practices but scriptures being documented and translated. However, religious conflict persists. This persistence is due to a myriad of factors, but if the salvific nature of multiple religious traditions is concerned with the re-orientation of its adherents towards reality-centredness then it begs the question why conflict continues to be such an issue. Mao's answer is if peace is simply a consequence or by-product of achieving salvation then its immediate need is not recognised.<sup>90</sup>

What Mao's ethical salvation entails is the immediacy in the valuing of the other. If the journey is from self-centredness to other-centredness then the individual must recognise and value the other early in their journey of religious adherence; compassion is not only fostered within but also between individuals. This is the messianic peace to which Levinas was referring and the same peace that may come too late in Hick's pluralism.

### Part 3.3 Peter Byrne and Tolerant Pluralism

#### *Shifting from diversity-as-problem-to-be-solved to diversity-as-difference-to-be-valued*

Byrne's tolerant pluralism was born out of the question of whether religious individuals can be tolerant and hold pluralist views all the while maintaining a devout commitment to the truth of their own religious beliefs.<sup>91</sup> If this is not possible then it seems a religious individual must revise their commitment in order to become more truly tolerant of others. Byrne's pluralism focuses on tolerance because unlike Hick, his pluralism is one which emphasises the true difference in religious belief. These theories have different methods because they

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<sup>88</sup> Mao, *Levinasian Re-Appraisal of Hick*, p5.

<sup>89</sup> Mao, *Levinasian Re-Appraisal of Hick*, p6.

<sup>90</sup> Mao, *Levinasian Re-Appraisal of Hick*, p8.

<sup>91</sup> Byrne, Peter. 2011. "Religious Tolerance, Diversity, And Pluralism". Royal Institute Of Philosophy Supplement 68: p287.



are achieving different goals. Hick's theory and its noumenal Real is an accounting for the metaphysics of religious diversity. Byrne's theory and its emphasis on tolerance is a way to navigate the pragmatics of religious diversity. Time has already been spent on the general tenets of pluralism as well as religious belief; because of this the following section deals with Byrne's tolerance and the issues it presents.

Six factors have to be present in order for tolerance to occur: difference, importance, opposition, power, non-interference and requirement.<sup>92</sup> For the sake of brevity we will be exploring importance, opposition and non-interference. Importance is the difference between the tolerator and the tolerated being treated as non-trivial, at least to the tolerator. Opposition is that the point of difference is one which the tolerator does not approve of. Non-interference is that the tolerator does not interfere with the tolerated or alter the point of difference.<sup>93</sup>

Once an understanding of these tenets is established, Byrne examines them in closer details and finds issues with their co-dependent structure. When understood to be working in conjunction it seems that importance and opposition are factors which entail that an individual can only tolerate that which they do not approve of. This disapproval is tantamount to the belief that the tolerated is objectively wrong or mistaken in their particular belief or practice. If this logic is held alongside the factor of non-interference it seems to Byrne that we are presented with a paradox. If a tolerator believes a behaviour to be objectively wrong and therefore better to not exist than exist then surely it is not only upon the tolerator to interfere with that behaviour but they would be justified in doing so.<sup>94</sup>

The answer to this paradox is in the recognition of the autonomy of other individuals as an equally important value. The value of autonomy is not worth compromising in order to rectify a perceived opposition in a point of difference.<sup>95</sup>

This line of questioning regarding the paradox of toleration can be dismissed entirely. Just because a tolerator deems a point of contention to be an opposition of import does not entail that the tolerator is objective in their judgement. Therefore, they are not necessitated to interfere with the point of contention. In some cases, this could be argued. For example when one places toleration into a religious context this shift from objective to subjective is not so easy. Specifically because, as Hick has faced with his own pluralism, many a religious tolerator believes themselves to be objectively on the correct side of the point of contention. To convince a religious individual that this objectivity was indeed subjective is again to require revision of the individuals beliefs. As Byrne states:

*"Both religious pluralists and tolerant pluralists do more than simply accept, without active opposition, the divergent religious beliefs of others. Both will welcome and encourage the expression of religious difference. Both will be interested in learning about the beliefs of others. But note that it is only the tolerant pluralist who will see in the different religious beliefs of others the occasion to re-examine her own. The beliefs of religious others (excluding the beliefs of the non-religious) cannot challenge*

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<sup>92</sup> Byrne, *Religious Tolerance, Diversity, And Pluralism*, A more comprehensive example can be found on p289.

<sup>93</sup> Byrne, *Religious Tolerance, Diversity, And Pluralism*, p289.

<sup>94</sup> Byrne, *Religious Tolerance, Diversity, And Pluralism*, p291.

<sup>95</sup> Byrne, *Religious Tolerance, Diversity, And Pluralism*, p292.

*those of the religious pluralist, for there is no opposition between the beliefs of religions covered by a pluralist hypothesis.”<sup>96</sup>*

The diversity of belief is acknowledged in religious pluralism but the metaphysical conflict of these beliefs is assuaged by the ultimacy of the noumenal Real. Tolerant pluralism alternatively acknowledges less the co-existence but more the co-conflict of religious belief. This point of difference between religious adherents is not just an alethic issue but an opportunity for deep self-reflection. It is a re-orientation from diversity-as-problem-to-be-solved to diversity-as-difference-to-be-valued. This isn't to say that Hick didn't value the learning opportunities provided by the difference in religious belief; his study of the world's religious traditions is evidence of the contrary. Nor are pluralists in general incapable of meaningfully engaging with multiple religious traditions. However, the primary aim for Hick's religious pluralism, as has been stated before, is to account for the diversity of religious belief and tradition; and within this theory there is a subliminal dismissiveness. If, for the sake of simplicity, we say all religions are equally salvific then there is little incentive for a religious individual to meaningfully engage outside their lane. Not an intentional component but nonetheless a consequence of the religious pluralist stance.

## CONCLUSIONARY REMARKS

Hick's work in *The Interpretation of Religion* is comprehensive. In it his pluralist hypothesis is given foundational evidence from various disciplines and his own summation of the world's religious diversity. The two pillars of the noumenal/phenomenal distinction and the primary soteriological concern of the post-axial religions are strong insofar as they more or less reflect the relationship between religious adherents and their religious tradition. However, as we have explored, there are shortcomings to Hick's pluralism that are difficult to categorically resolve.

Hick makes a point of asserting his pluralism is a hypothesis; a description of the data placed before him. This is not completely true because at times Hick's pluralism slips into prescriptivism through the way in which the theory requires most religious adherents to alter their self-understanding to comply. Admittedly, there is nothing essentially wrong with prescriptivism in this context; it is the moving between this and descriptivism whilst only claiming the latter that becomes problematic.

Pluralism as a form of exclusivism is a topic we touched on multiple times and whilst Hick's response in the delineation of first and second-order commitments, an element of coercion still exists. Even then in our examination of D'Costa criticisms, the issue of transcendental agnosticism is a real threat. How a person can make meaningful assertions about the transcendental Real or even fully commit to specific religious tradition is complicated by this agnosticism supposedly required and yet millions of people continue to do both these things. Through Meeker's discomfort with Hick's pluralism as an exclusivist we have seen the relationship between salvation/liberation and altruistic behaviour; with the latter being a consequence of the former and not vice versa.

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<sup>96</sup> Byrne, *Religious Tolerance, Diversity, And Pluralism*, p299.

With Eddy and the concern for radical subjectivism we have clarified that in emphasising and valuing the contribution of human awareness to the perceiving of the phenomenal Real we elevate religious experience above subjectivism. Still, we need to be mindful of the limited nature of human awareness when postulating theories of religion. With Kvanvig we explored what the Buridan's paradox means for Hick's theory and whether it is possible to be a religious adherent and a pluralist; perhaps it is, just not Hick's particular brand.

With Hassan we discovered the importance of maintaining parameters around a theory so as to not confuse disciplines. Hick's pluralism is certainly one which relies on inter-disciplinary study but it is firmly a philosophy of religion. In order to fully account for religious diversity it is a philosophy not a theology that has the greatest opportunity to be accepted. The levinasian ethics expounded by Mao is a valuable one. If we spend too much time looking up we might miss what is around us. Hick's pluralism is one which appreciates this sentiment but it is Mao's requirement for other-centredness which makes it explicit. By extension, as discussed with Byrne, diversity-as-difference-to-be-valued is an important assertion. Without this Hick's pluralism falls back to its descriptivist intentions and leaves everything as close to 'as is' as possible. Yet tolerance is then expected to be something which appears from each religious tradition organically.

There are issues with Hick's pluralism that are not adequately resolved. Questions regarding conflicting truth claims, the need for revision and the soteriological concern are all elements that simultaneously are both essential to Hick's theory and impinge on it. These questions should be kept in the back of the mind moving forward. This exploration of Hick's pluralist hypothesis is the first of the two expeditions. The second of these is Section II on the subject of metaphor and its role in embodied religious experience. It is in the combining of the learning achieved in both of these expeditions that we create the foundations for the RELICS method.



## SECTION II: Conceptual Metaphor Theory





## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between this section and first is characteristically one of call and response. At the end of our exploration of Hick's pluralism we are left with the need to address the weaknesses that we called attention to. My intention in this section is to illustrate how an expanded version of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) synthesises with our version of Hick's pluralism to provide a platform for the RELICS method. We start by first explaining CMT along with the principles and assertions that underpin it. We then move on to some of the obstacles CMT faces and the pre-cognitive considerations not attested to within the theory itself. Finally we make a cursory investigation into the role CMT can play in the philosophy of religion. This investigation with the obstacles and pre-cognitive considerations that come before it all point towards the need for significant changes to CMT. So that it might both properly reflect the embodied experience of the human condition as well as provide a platform from which, alongside our condensed pluralism, we build the RELICS method.

While the discourse concerning metaphor dates back to Plato the device became seriously considered in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A hallmark of this period is the lack of a clear distinction between metaphor and figurative language; the terms were interchangeable. For some this persists with metaphor understood as an umbrella term which shelters other phenomena such as analogy, metonymy and synecdoche. For an increasing number of people this is too reductive a categorization. Instead, non-literal language has become the umbrella term under which the aforementioned phenomena in addition to our primary concern, metaphor, is placed. Classically, metaphors were considered a device for transferring a set of lexical items from one term to another. Much later, metaphors were characterised as being of both language and thought, not simply a linguistic device but also cognitive. Now we are within the era of metaphor as conceptual phenomena. Metaphors are those things which underpin and form the foundation for our conceptual system and therefore guide how we interact with and convey our experienced reality. This has meant that instead of providing definitions of metaphor, those participating in this scholarship have instead offered theories as to how metaphors work. It is one such theory which we turn to now.

## PART 4: Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory

In their seminal book *Metaphors We Live By* George Lakoff and Mark Johnson propose that metaphor is not only central to our language but to our thoughts and actions. Over the course of the book they assert that our conceptual system is inherently metaphorical. This conceptual system is not only what gives structure to our mental processes but provides guides within the functioning of day to day existence. What we experience and how we experience is given shape by our conceptual system.<sup>97</sup> A concession of the cognitive metaphor theory is that we cannot study directly our conceptual system for fear of opting into a cyclical process of using our conceptual system to understand our conceptual system. We can however, study this system indirectly through examining the language we use and

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<sup>97</sup> Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. 2003. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p6.

how it is indicative of that system. In other words, the structure of our language is emblematic of the structure of our conceptual system. However, Lakoff and Johnson maintain that we can see it evidenced in language. Our conceptual system not only structures our thoughts but naturally by extension our communication also. This conceptual system is composed of conceptual schemata which is in turn comprised of 'conceptual metaphors'. These metaphors are conceptual because they are the foundation for the understanding of concepts. For example for the concept of 'love' there are a myriad of conceptual metaphors, for example:

#### **LOVE IS WAR**

She *fled* from her *advances*  
She *pursued* him relentlessly  
He *won* his hand in marriage  
They are *besieged* by suitors  
He *enlisted* the aid of her friends  
He made an *ally* of her mother

These terms are not only used in the way we talk about love but the way we experience love. The more parallels, the more fitting a metaphor is the more entrenched that conceptual metaphor becomes. This is the reason LOVE IS WAR<sup>98</sup> has become so universal whilst LOVE IS CROCHET has remained relatively unmined. However, there is no single conceptual metaphor for any given concept, indeed the opposite. Conceptual metaphors characteristically only provide a particular view, a particular interpretation, of a concept. Other conceptual metaphors are equally valuable in the perspective they offer, for instance:

#### **LOVE IS MAGIC**

She *cast* a *spell* on me  
The *magic* is gone  
He was *spellbound*  
She had me *hypnotised*  
He has me in a *trance*  
He was *charmed* by her

An equally insightful perspective on the concept of love but from and within a completely different framing. The way in which we use words, have thoughts and perform actions are all informed by conceptual metaphors like these.<sup>99</sup> As we move through everyday life we are constantly moving between conceptual schemata by utilising our conceptual system. We change the conceptual metaphors we use to reflect our embodied experience. To show how systematic and pervasive these conceptual metaphors can be consider the following:

#### **TIME IS MONEY**

The long queue *cost* him an hour  
She *invested* a lot of time in them

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<sup>98</sup> Throughout the following two sections these conceptual metaphors will be capitalised. This is a distinction that Lakoff and Johnson make in *Metaphors We Live By* and it will be a useful distinction to make here too as we discuss metaphors of various usages and states.

<sup>99</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p7.

That is how he *spends* his time  
She's living on *borrowed* time  
They were *charitable* with their time  
He *lost* a lot of time at the casino<sup>100</sup>

When we frame the concept of 'time' this way we understand it as a valuable commodity, a limited resource that we spend in return for something.<sup>101</sup> The democratic judiciary system has its foundation in this conceptual schematic. If a person commits a crime a debt is owed. That person is required to repay their debt by repaying with community service or by spending time in a secure facility. This is an example of the ways in which conceptual metaphors not only inform expression but guide actions. However, as mentioned previously, conceptual metaphors only illumine a particular view, as they highlight some of its aspects they equally shadow others. TIME IS MONEY carries a list of entailments; to spend time wisely, to not waste other people's time and to be productive with our own. If we switch to a different conceptual metaphor, we change the way we conceive of time and therefore create a new list of entailments. TIME IS A RIVER entails that time flows in a particular direction, perhaps that every moment is different or that it is not lifeless like currency but dynamic like water. The plurality of conceptual metaphors is a core principle we will utilise in the RELICS method.

## Part 4.1 The Ontology of Metaphor

### *A clarification on the best way to conceptualise metaphor and its relevance*

For a considerable amount of time metaphor was considered a linguistic device; this attitude has since shifted and now metaphor has been posited with increasing frequency as a cognitive mechanism. The benefit of such a shift comes with a new ability to frame metaphor not only within the system of language but also in images, sounds and gestures.<sup>102</sup> As previously discussed Cognitive Metaphor Theory holds that metaphorical thought is based in bodily experience, and that irrespective of the myriad knowledge domains and available mapping relationships, all of these are rooted in our immediate interactions with the environment. The most basic of these mapping relationships - image-schemata - are the foundations of metaphorical thought.

This section does assume a side in the debate on the ontology of metaphor. Broadly speaking, the debate is between cognitive linguists and relevance theorists, with the former asserting that metaphor is a matter of thought and the latter maintaining its foundation is in language use. The central role embodied experience plays in conceptual metaphor theory is why the cognitive linguistic approach is the position explored here. However, we will see in the closing segments of this section how this approach can adopt some aspects of relevance theoretics.

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<sup>100</sup> For analogous examples see Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p8.

<sup>101</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p8.

<sup>102</sup> Alessandrini, Nicolás. 2016. "Development Of Metaphorical Thought Before Language: The Pragmatic Construction Of Metaphors In Action". *Integrative Psychological And Behavioral Science* 51 (4): p619.

Within cognitive linguistics the understanding is that the working on or with metaphor is speculative in nature; that it is possible to talk of metaphor in a relatively detached manner. The second is conversely its opposite wherein metaphor is a performative constant of active thought. These two positions cannot be left simply as opposing alternatives because their central theses are central to the ontology of metaphor. The deeper issue, as Clive Cazeaux frames it, is that:

*"...neither can an impartial philosophical appraisal of the most cogent or defensible theory be made, since the status and conduct of philosophy are part of the problem."*

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The following writing will deal first with unpacking these opposing views before moving onto how we might dissolve the seemingly unresolvable. Metaphor now is considered not solely a poetic device of literature but as a process of cross domain mapping which is fundamental to our lives of active thought. Cazeaux's enquiry into metaphor is concerned with the ramifications of such an assertion, including the consequences of framing metaphor as a fundamental aspect of human life and whether or not the only way to speak about metaphor is metaphorically.<sup>104</sup>

Lakoff and Johnson's view is that metaphor is very much integral to the way in which we interact with our reality because metaphors are the concepts which mould and guide our everyday actions. In their view, our bodily experience of our reality forms the basis for conceptual metaphors in which the metaphor acts as a conduit connecting our known bodily experience to the thinking and perceiving of concepts beyond that experience. Therefore, metaphor is a translative tool by which abstract possibilities become immediate bodily realities.<sup>105</sup> Lakoff and Johnson are able to refer to metaphor and make claims about the mechanism because, from their perspective, this speculative or scientific discourse is one which stands apart from the phenomena itself and is therefore able to distinguish and understand metaphor as a mechanism.<sup>106</sup>

On the other side of the argument Derrida holds that it is impossible to conceptualise or talk about metaphor without employing metaphor; it is what he calls an 'intractable structure'.<sup>107</sup> For him the deconstruction of metaphor cannot be an analytical breakdown of the constituent parts because while it may be possible to identify particular processes they at all times remain intact in their reconstruction and formation of the critic's own views.<sup>108</sup> Though not a word that he uses, it seems that for Derrida, metaphors are *fractal* in nature, meaning that when attempting to analyse a part of metaphor one finds that part to be as equally metaphorical as the whole. This is not to say that the analysis of metaphor is a futile endeavour, but it is important to recognise the parameters within which it operates. These are two views with two fundamentally different approaches.

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<sup>103</sup> Cazeaux, Clive. 2011. "Living Metaphor". Studi Filosofici 34: p291.

<sup>104</sup> Cazeaux, *Living Metaphor*, p293.

<sup>105</sup> Cazeaux, *Living Metaphor*, p293.

<sup>106</sup> Cazeaux, *Living Metaphor*, p295.

<sup>107</sup> Cazeaux, *Living Metaphor*, p292.

<sup>108</sup> Cazeaux, *Living Metaphor*, p297.



So, how to proceed? Whilst appearing to be at conflict over the nature of metaphor, making opposing claims on the ontology of metaphor, these theories are operating on different planes by virtue of their disciplinary commitments. This becomes an escapable issue when we understand that the ontology and discourse are linked. As will be resounded throughout this thesis, metaphor, like language, is a subject that will always require the attention of multiple disciplines. Whether conducted by the speculative cognitive linguist or the performative philosopher of language, the one cannot resolve the other. It is incorrect to place these two views as diametric opposites.

The avenue that this thesis will be taking is one informed by each of these views, though skewing towards one. Essentially the work done by Lakoff and Johnson in the area of cognitive linguistics is a valuable one, however it is still one housed within the discipline of linguistics. With this being a paper on the philosophies of religion and language, to take on Lakoff and Johnson's field as well would require a juggling act that, in the unlikely event of success, would still detract from the quality of thought of the philosophies. However, what we can seek out is the repercussions of Lakoff and Johnson's cognitive linguistics for the philosophy of language; appropriately, how the contentions made in one domain impact another. In a simple reading of Derrida, there is the position that asking questions concerning the consequences of a phrase being a metaphor cannot be posited without generating a 'vicious circle'.<sup>109</sup> *The confinement of this circle only exists if the power of discovery that figurative language can provide is not acknowledged.* Using figurative language in our exploration of metaphor is only problematic if we value the literal over the nonliteral, which, as we will explore in further sections, is an inappropriate stance to take. Fortunately Cazeaux arrives at a conclusion of sorts and it is this conclusion that we will reframe within the context of this paper.

This middle way would be called a compromise by some; a dodge, or a weak solution. This would be an act of mischaracterisation, and one more likely performed by those who subscribe to a speculative train of thought. From the position of the performative, the mode in which metaphor is understood to be constantly at work, an interweaving of the two avenues is the most appropriate way of acknowledging the contesting views without requiring the resolution of its conflict. This is how we will proceed. Not aligning with the performative method in its contestation of ideas or with the speculative method, but rather, with a performative appraisal of this contestation in the aim of learning as much as possible. Cazeaux speaks to this:

*"What does belong to philosophy? Maybe a stance of being simultaneously inside, of the system, and outside, about the system, is precisely what is required. Isn't this the territory where living metaphor excels, with new metaphors testing our sense of what belongs and does not belong to a semantic domain? A sense of belonging is intrinsic to thought, judgment and categorization... Metaphor upsets this process. It both destabilizes and revives a sense of what can belong: destabilization because it combines two concepts which do not customarily go together, and revivification because the combination of concepts is an occasion for (depending upon which theory one subscribes to) increasing the scope of the concepts semantic fields or*

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<sup>109</sup> Cazeaux, *Living Metaphor*, p294.

*reminding us of our creative being-within-language, a creativity which should not remain content with established significations and their customary belongings.”*<sup>110</sup>

The concept of being-in-language is an acknowledgement that we are not simply beings who use language but also “beings whose condition is defined and constructed in language”.<sup>111</sup>

## Part 4.2 Additional Considerations

*“Metaphorical thought is an emerging result of a complex web of dynamic relationships between pre-linguistic and socioculturally regulated semiotic systems”*<sup>112</sup>

Metaphorical linguistic expressions are the evidence for the cognitive metaphorical projections which provide the foundation for our language and play an essential part in the creation of conceptual systems. These cognitive metaphorical projections are embedded to the extent that they inform not only our language but, by natural extension, our very thoughts and actions. There is a concern that by focussing on metaphorical linguistic expressions as the evidence for these projections that we miss other evidence. Pre-linguistic and non-linguistic areas of expression would be valuable areas to explore, especially considering the ability of metaphors to capture concepts beyond language. More on this in the third part of this section.

Within their theory, Lakoff and Johnson establish three primary forms of metaphorical classifications: orientation, ontological, and structural. All three primary forms are grounded in the immediate understanding, provided through our bodies, of three areas of comprehension: our bodies, the interaction between those bodies and our physical environment, and our intersubjective interactions with others whose foundational experience is the same as our own. This embodied experience of the world is what enables us to connect two domains within a metaphorical instantiation. This is achieved through the topological structures and informational relationships of the source domain, that which is grounded in our immediate understanding, being applied to the target domain, usually, but not exclusively, an abstraction.

## Part 4.3 Invariance Principle

*Even if a metaphor is considered successful, it can never elucidate the complete picture of the concept*

Originally proposed by Lakoff and Turner in their *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*, this unidirectional mapping from source to target domain is called the invariance principle. The cross domain mapping which occurs in metaphorical instantiations takes into account the associative networks of the two concepts. These networks are each comprised of lexical items. When a cross domain mapping occurs, the lexical items that once were conventional solely within one domain become not so within the metaphorical instantiation. Those which are conventional enjoy an easy correlative spot on the new

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<sup>110</sup> Cazeaux, *Living Metaphor*, p306.

<sup>111</sup> Cazeaux, *Living Metaphor*, p307.

<sup>112</sup> Alessandrini, *Development of Metaphorical Thought*, p620.

topography. These are the mappings which come to mind first and don't require effort. Conversely, the unconventional lexical items are those which might not necessarily come straight to mind but are nonetheless able to be mapped to the new topography as long as they don't conflict with that which has already been conventionally mapped.

Take for example the conceptual metaphor of LOVE IS A PHYSICAL FORCE. With this metaphor our comprehension of LOVE is invited to be understood in terms of a PHYSICAL FORCE. The evidence being in phrases such as "His life *revolves* around him", "They *gravitated* towards each other immediately", and "Unfortunately, they just lost their *momentum*". From the perspective of CMT, the inverse is not viable. When cross domain mapping occurs the lexical items of both the source and target domains involved in the mapping are primarily concerned with preserving the image-schemata or topography of the target domain whilst secondarily importing as much additional structure from the source domain as possible without endangering the preservation of the target.<sup>113</sup> The issue with the invariance principle is that it promotes a form of literalism, though more on this in the final part of this section. For now, Nicolás Alessandróni articulates this mapping well when he says:

*"In this sense, the linguistic-conceptual meaning of a metaphorical expression will be determined by the mapping possibilities that exist between the elements pertaining to the source and target domains that preserve the topological structure of the target domain."*<sup>114</sup>

What the invariance principle is helpful in recognising is that even if a metaphor is considered successful, it can never elucidate the complete picture of the concept in the target domain. Necessary to the process is the selection of appropriate lexical items, of preferences for particular parts of each domain's associative networks. In this way the multiplicity of metaphorical application to the same concept is possible.

#### Part 4.4 Dead and Living Metaphors

*We have dead metaphors because we have assumptively designated them as such through a high frequency of use*

While it is broadly agreed there is a spectrum of conventionality from highly conventional 'dead' metaphors to highly poetic 'living' ones, disagreement arises around how these different types of metaphor function as well as their appropriate use cases. For Elisabeth Camp, an asset to the direct expressionist view is the existence of dead and dying metaphors. These are words or phrases that while once metaphorical have become so common in use that their nonliteral meaning has now become their primary meaning, for example:

- a.) I feel over the moon
- b.) This work is killing me

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<sup>113</sup> Alessandróni, *Development of Metaphorical Thought*, p625.

<sup>114</sup> Alessandróni, *Development of Metaphorical Thought*, p625.

In these cases no time is spent cognitively eliminating the literal absurdity before continuing to mine their metaphorical meaning; the interpretation proceeds directly to the figurative. Camp qualifies this in remarking that dead metaphors lie at only one end of the spectrum of conventionality to novelty, with poetic metaphors such as,

They cleave the gloom of dreams, a blinding flame,<sup>115</sup>

being placed at the other end as a living metaphor. These are intentionally nonliteral phrases which require and invite sustained interpretive effort.<sup>116</sup> Between these two poles are the conversational metaphors which are not as immediately available as their dead brothers nor as obligatorily opaque as their poetic sisters. Conversational metaphors such as,

- a.) This food's delicious, Dave's a magician
- b.) Longform writing is a gruelling hike

all occupy this middle ground. It seems then that these conversational and poetic metaphors are less complimentary to the direct expressionist view than dead metaphors due to their increased need for interpretation. I would argue however that this is a false delineation. Instead, I suggest conversational metaphors are evidence for the nuanced way in which we assumptively assign categorisations like 'dead', 'living' and 'conversational'. What makes metaphors alive or dead is their exploratory status. We have dead metaphors because we have assumptively designated them as such through a high frequency of use. This is why poetic metaphors are considered 'living', they have a low if not non-existent frequency of use. The process of recalling high frequency metaphors becomes more and more refined, and so it becomes engrained in a particular context with a particular meaning. In other words, as specific phrases become more and more common the exploratory pathway becomes more and more trodden.

## PART 5: The Obstacles of Conceptual Metaphor Theory

In the part that follows I will discuss some of the obstacles facing conceptual metaphor theory and the amendments I believe they require of it. Bidirectional metaphors threaten the stability of the invariance principle, the relationship between private experience and language use is questioned, and CMT's reliance on an idealised individual is all discussed below. All of the obstacles here require an expansion of what we consider cognitive metaphor theory to encompass. This expansion is one of the foundations for the RELICS method we will discuss in Section III.

### Part 5.1 Bidirectional Metaphors

*Evidence that cross domain mapping is not solely a method for ordering domains*

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<sup>115</sup> Taken from James Joyce's *I Hear an Army Charging Upon The Land*

<sup>116</sup> Camp, Elisabeth. 2006. "Contextualism, Metaphor, And What Is Said". *Mind & Language* 21 (3): p290.

There are obstacles that are not properly addressed in cognitive metaphor theory. There are issues surrounding presenting a cognitively valid concept of metaphor and the hierarchy of immediacy attributed to different domains of experience.<sup>117</sup> The central tenet of conceptual metaphor theory being that “all abstract concepts ultimately derive from our immediate experience of physical action and perception”.<sup>118</sup> All abstract concepts fall through a chain of association before emerging in our embodied experience:

*“Once a domain of knowledge becomes well known, it can itself serve as a source domain (basis) for understanding more novel concepts. After you have learned to think of light as a kind of water (that flows, pours in, fills the room, etc.), you can then learn to think about hope or reason as a kind of light. Ultimately, your knowledge of any abstract domain is thus grounded in your direct, first-hand, physical experience.”<sup>119</sup>*

Matthias W. Madsen offers the picture of a ‘tree of knowledge’ with our embodied experience as the trunk and increasingly abstract concepts, the branches and leaves. Madsen only offers this tree to chop it down however: his view, and one which I support, is that people do not have essentially the same bodies and relevant environments and, therefore, the same form of immediate experience is not a universal given. In other words, it is a mistake to construe “how ‘we’ think on the basis of linguistic observations or to expect a public language to reflect a private experience.”<sup>120</sup> Madsen challenges that embodied experience is necessitated for the comprehension of metaphor.

Naturally, in asserting the fallibility of conceptual metaphor theory the question regarding how we understand and engage with abstract concepts is left open. Madsen doesn’t answer this question and simply states that there are probably numerous strategies at the disposal of any given individual and that these strategies develop depending on age, circumstance, context and experience. The motivation behind his paper is to argue that a myriad of strategies cannot be amalgamated into a single ‘conceptual system’, much less a system that is expressly represented within language.<sup>121</sup> One of the issues with the tree-of-knowledge way of relating abstract concepts to embodied experience is when branches start to reach across the tree and fuse. This is what happens in the case of bidirectional metaphors. Conceptual metaphors like BIOLOGY IS POLITICS and POLITICS IS BIOLOGY are equally viable but also equally co-dependent; the cross domain mapping goes across, not down.

#### BIOLOGY IS POLITICS

1. The animal kingdom
2. Dinosaurs ruled the earth
3. The lion is the king of the beasts
4. The law of the jungle

#### POLITICS IS BIOLOGY

1. Ben-Gurion turned from a hawk into a dove
2. Perry is leading the pack in new poll
3. It’s is a sheep’s vote
4. The GOP is playing alpha male

<sup>117</sup> Madsen, Mathias W. 2015. “Cognitive Metaphor Theory And The Metaphysics Of Immediacy”. Cognitive Science 40 (4): p881.

<sup>118</sup> Madsen, *The Metaphysics of Immediacy*, p881.

<sup>119</sup> Madsen, *The Metaphysics of Immediacy*, p882.

<sup>120</sup> Madsen, *The Metaphysics of Immediacy*, p882.

<sup>121</sup> Madsen, *The Metaphysics of Immediacy*, p883.

With other directional pairs including but not limited to:

PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS (A wild teenager) || ANIMALS ARE PEOPLE (A social insect)  
ORGANISMS ARE MACHINES (Hearts pump) || MACHINES ARE ORGANISMS (Computers think)  
COUNTRIES ARE FAMILIES (Founding fathers) || FAMILIES ARE COUNTRIES (My mom's a dictator)  
COUNTRIES ARE BODIES (Head of state) || BODIES ARE COUNTRIES (Immune defence)  
LANGUAGE IS MUSIC (Learn German by ear) || MUSIC IS LANGUAGE (I wrote that song)<sup>122</sup>

All of these are evidence that cross domain mapping is not solely a method for ordering domains. If they were then, continuing the tree of knowledge metaphor, LANGUAGE would be the branch for MUSIC as well as the leaves; it would be simultaneously closer and further from our embodied experience. This would mean all of the domains mentioned in the examples above would collapse into a single equivalence class.<sup>123</sup> Hence the tree of knowledge, the ordering of the abstract to the embodied, is an impossibility made apparent by the existence of bidirectional metaphors. From this it becomes conceptually problematic to claim that our embodied experience is the 'root' of our conceptual system when the tree doesn't exist.

## Part 5.2 Private Experience and Language Use

*Shared language needn't be universally indicative of the cognition of every individual*

For Madsen communicative pressures are another problematic wedge between our conceptual systems and the language we use. Namely, the societal pressures which require an individual's use of language to prioritise intelligibility for their audience over faithfully expressing their private experience.<sup>124</sup>

*"The difference between the personal experiences of different individuals is one source of variability that makes an inference from language use to psychology problematic. But there is also a time dimension to this variability: The world changes, and this entails changes in the skills sets, strategies, and cognitive styles of the people in it. Your relationship to wind, rain, salt, hunger, horses, roads, and fields is very different from that of a late medieval peasant or sailor. It would be a bit of a stretch to say you had the same 'grounding' for metaphorical uses of plow-through, nip it in the bud, know the ropes, or anchor."<sup>125</sup>*

Madsen offers an analogy to clarify - drawing from a bag of marbles. Each individual has their own bag of marbles, each representative of a meaning. There is also another bag of marbles not attached to any individual which represents shared meaning. Each language-use is a choice made by the individual to first either draw from their own bag of meaning, their private experience, or from the bag of shared meaning, collective agreement à la Merriam-Webster or the Oxford English. Then the individual replaces a random marble within the shared meaning bag with the marble they selected (even if this marble came from the shared meaning bag to begin with). Over time the shared meaning bag will come

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<sup>122</sup> Madsen, *The Metaphysics of Immediacy*, examples taken from p893-94.

<sup>123</sup> Madsen, *The Metaphysics of Immediacy*, p893-94.

<sup>124</sup> Madsen, *The Metaphysics of Immediacy*, p897.

<sup>125</sup> Madsen, *The Metaphysics of Immediacy*, p897.



to reflect the average composition of the individual bags. However, and here is where Madsen deviates from cognitive metaphor theory, the variation between the individual bags themselves remains high. The only way to replace the marbles within the individual bags is through a change in the individual's body or environment.<sup>126</sup> Fortunately perhaps for cognitive metaphor theory this analogy is still one which illustrates a similar type of conceptual system with systematic patterns that cognitive metaphor theorists posit. The difference however, is Madsen's model doesn't require the constraining notion of a shared language being equally indicative of the cognition of any given individual.

### Part 5.3 Sensorial Paradigm Shifts

*"Shared experience does not reliably imply shared language, and shared language does not reliably imply shared experience"*<sup>127</sup>

Many languages, like English, contain a plethora of metaphors grounded in our embodied experience. From our visual experience come phrases like 'I'll see you around' and 'I see what you mean', these being based on SIGHT IS PRESENCE and SIGHT IS KNOWING respectively. This grounding is less representative when we consider the millions of blind people who utilise the same language as those who are not. Whether being born blind or having blindness develop over time, these people still say and, more importantly, know what it means to say, 'I'll see you around' and 'I see what you mean'. This indicates that visual metaphors do not require individual visual experience; these metaphors can be intelligible to an individual both after sight has been lost and if it never existed. Now, not only do members of the blind community participate in the conceptual metaphors that abound what is framed within cognitive metaphor theory as 'universal', but also switch preferences for the conceptual metaphors which reflect their own embodied experience. Madsen supplies the inclusion and sometimes preference for MORE IS HEAVY or HIGH-PITCHED conceptual metaphors over MORE IS UP because for visually impaired individuals weight and sound are better indicators of quantity than height.<sup>128</sup> This preference however does not exclude these individuals from understanding and participating in the conceptual metaphors which are predisposed to individuals with vision; nor does it exile those individuals to a visually-impaired language that is only used and understood by members of that community. All of this is to explain that there are numerous ways in which an individual's body changes and perhaps shifts outside of what might be considered cultural norms. Further, the behavioural strategies that any given individual employs in response to such a shift are equally numerous. Sensory loss as well as childbirth and trauma are all paradigm-shifting occurrences which fundamentally change an individual's body and experiential world. These are all proof that "people who speak the same language do not necessarily 'see' the world the same way".<sup>129</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Madsen, *The Metaphysics of Immediacy*, p898.

<sup>127</sup> Madsen, *The Metaphysics of Immediacy*, p901.

<sup>128</sup> Madsen, *The Metaphysics of Immediacy*, p900.

<sup>129</sup> Madsen, *The Metaphysics of Immediacy*, p900.

What communicative pressures and sensorial paradigm shifts expose is that, as Madsen states, “shared experience does not reliably imply shared language, and shared language does not reliably imply shared experience”.<sup>130</sup>

*“This fact is easy to forget for a linguist studying the products of communication, since communication by definition requires us to overcome our differences. Language has a tendency to steamroll any idiosyncrasies that you and I have. For this reason, a psychology built on linguistic observation will always have a tendency to replace the cognition of the actual individual with cognition of an idealized average individual, and this fictional person might differ or not have much in common with any single member of the speech community.”<sup>131</sup>*

A dangerous consequence of cognitive metaphor theory is that it suggests that ‘immediate experience’ is universal; seemingly foregoing the notion that what stands in direct relationship with immediacy is the context provided by the particular individual and the space within which that individual operates. Madsen’s recommendation is a simple one: give up the assertion that linguistic behaviour is a direct expression of private experience.<sup>132</sup> We do not need to have personally embodied the same experience that motivates a conceptual metaphor in order to understand and use it. In other words, metaphors may initially rise in embodied experience, but their general use does not require that all others need to have shared said experience.

## PART 6: Pre-Cognitive Considerations

In the part that follows we move into considering the pre-cognitive aspect of embodied experience which Lakoff and Johnson leave overlooked in their theory. This includes exploring multimodal metaphors and how pre-linguistic behaviour can express our embodied experience and our colloquial use of sentence non-literality. The contextualist approach to metaphor usage is also investigated before turning to ways in which these pre-cognitive considerations have been used in the work of Victoria Harrison.

### Part 6.1 Multimodal Metaphors

*“Mind and culture should not be understood as being variables of a reactive context, but instead as two inseparable terms belonging to one co-construction process wherein each partakes in the genesis and production of the other”<sup>133</sup>*

Whilst Alessandrini includes a list of research which explored new applications of non-linguistic multimodal metaphors the majority of the work carried out maintained a linguistic logic.<sup>134</sup> This is indicative of a restriction that the introduction of cognitive metaphor theory and its subsequent discourse created; in emphasizing the linguistic evidence for our cognitive processing, reliance is placed on dissecting and knowing our language. So, whilst

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<sup>130</sup> Madsen, *The Metaphysics of Immediacy*, p901.

<sup>131</sup> Madsen, *The Metaphysics of Immediacy*, p904.

<sup>132</sup> Madsen, *The Metaphysics of Immediacy*, p904.

<sup>133</sup> Alessandrini, *Development of Metaphorical Thought*, p630.

<sup>134</sup> Alessandrini, *Development of Metaphorical Thought*, p619.

other modes were introduced by the theory, the preoccupation with language remained because that is where the evidence was believed to be found.

The non-linguistic component of metaphorical thought is substantial, which is eluded to in CMT's multimodal metaphorical instantiations. The myriad of offerings when it comes to defining metaphor is as wide ranging as its own instantiation. Naturally these definitions are equally, if not more, representative of the definer than the defined. The definition assumed and the analysis performed is particular to the discipline performing the analysis.

There is an opportunity to explore the pre-linguistic behaviours on which metaphorical thought could be grounded. Specifically, how sociocultural contexts frame these behaviours, how different cultural configurations inform our ability to create and comprehend linguistic metaphors.<sup>135</sup> As we touched on with Madsen, this stems from a general critique of Lakoff and Johnson's original CMT. Namely, the presence of an idealised individual at the centre of the theory upon which all assertions and assumptions are made. A homogenised individual who, whilst informed by their embodied experience of the environment, is expected to represent every individual in every environment. Alessandrini's cultural psychological investigation of how image-schemata is culturally constructed is important because it values the bidirectional transference between anthropogenetic development and cognitive processes.

## Part 6.2 Sentence Non-Literality

*The relationship between what is said and what is conveyed*

For Kent Bach there is value to be gleaned from discussing the nature of loose talk. This loose talk isn't the use of vague terms or exaggeration but our tendency to leave words out when speaking. When saying "I'm going for a drive" the driver does not include *in my car* or when saying "thank you for stopping by" the serviceperson does not include *my place of work whereby I am contractually obliged to be pleasant*. These are examples of what Bach calls *impliciture*, as opposed to Grice's *implicature*. The latter is an indirect constative speech act in which one says and means one thing and by extension asserts something else in addition. With the former, *impliciture*, one says something but does not mean that; instead what is meant includes an implicit qualification -information that could have been made explicit but was not.<sup>136</sup> An implication of *impliciture* is the construal of sentence nonliterality; the sentence as a whole is considered nonliteral, no specific part of the sentence is culpable.

Fortunately Bach takes the time to address the relationship between what is said and what is conveyed in his *implicitures*. At first glance it appears to be simple entailment, a logical extension of the utterance, as in the following examples:

1. (a) Legolas and Gimli fought in a battle.
2. (b) Legolas grabbed a shield and skated on it.
3. (c) Legolas surveyed the field and offered Gimli a box.

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<sup>135</sup> Alessandrini, *Development of Metaphorical Thought*, p630.

<sup>136</sup> Bach, Kent. 2001. "Speaking Loosely: Sentence Nonliterality". *Midwest Studies In Philosophy* 25 (1): p252

4. (a+) Legolas and Gimli fought in a battle *together*.
5. (b+) Legolas grabbed a shield and skated on it *down the stairs*.
6. (c+) Legolas surveyed the field and *then* offered Gimli a box.<sup>137</sup>

What is taking place here through *impliciture* is conceptual strengthening. Although not actually uttered, the implicit qualification is nevertheless still conveyed. I have included this brief detour because even when we are speaking literally we aren't speaking wholly literally. We leave out swathes of literal information when we converse. So to be a literalist and hold literal language as the pinnacle of communication is to not take seriously how malleable it is.

### Part 6.3 Direct Expression and Truth

*"Expressions used metaphorically are context-dependent expressions... constructing a metaphorical interpretation is not a case of sense selection but of sense creation."*<sup>138</sup>

To claim that all sentences containing metaphors as truth-valued is to stretch feasibility because the same sentences can be deployed in the form of questions, requests and imperatives. Therefore, as Anne Bezuidenhout asserts, it would be more appropriate to state that all sentences containing metaphors directly express propositions.<sup>139</sup> It is only when these sentences take the form of an assertion are they made available to truth evaluation. A simple definition of figurative or nonliteral language is that one can say one thing and mean something else instead of or as well as what's communicated. Within this possibility not only metaphor but other language uses such as irony and exaggeration are housed. It is this oversimplified definition that Bezuidenhout challenges. She makes a case that in metaphorical uses of language what is said and what is meant are aligned, it is directly expressed. A specific distinction here is key; the characterisation of metaphorical interpretation as a semantic or pragmatic phenomenon. Traditionally the former was considered the assumptive method of metaphorical interpretation. Since the introduction of Lakoff and Johnson's CMT and the emphasis of embodied experience, the support for the latter has become more widespread. Naturally there are arguments for both of these characterisations, too many to include here; however, the focus for Bezuidenhout is that the pragmatic interpretation of metaphor takes its cue from its direct expression.

Bezuidenhout calls her theory on metaphor and what is said a 'contextualist' conception because "it allows that some aspects of what is said may be entirely pragmatically determined. That is, there may be no syntactic or semantic rule that generates these aspects of what is said".<sup>140</sup> For example, two people are moving through an abandoned house and one says to the other:

<sup>137</sup> Bach, *Speaking Loosely*, for analogous, less cinematic examples see p253

<sup>138</sup> Bezuidenhout, Anne. 2001. "Metaphor And What Is Said: A Defense Of A Direct Expression View Of Metaphor". *Midwest Studies In Philosophy* 25 (1): p175.

<sup>139</sup> Bezuidenhout, *Metaphor and What is Said*, p154.

<sup>140</sup> Bezuidenhout, *Metaphor and What is Said*, p164.

It is *silent* in this house.

The issue is there is a slight breeze coming through an open window, the floorboards beneath their feet are creaking and they are both anxiously breathing. All of which generate sound.<sup>141</sup> Regardless, the person isn't interpreted to be lying, ironic or sarcastic and something meaningful is still conveyed. The emphasis through italics in the above example is intentional, it denotes what is called an *ad hoc* concept. This *ad hoc* concept is an element within the proposition expressed through the above phrase. For this *ad hoc* concept to be comprehended the hearer must composite the meaning from various clues: the semantically encoded content of the word, the context within which it is spoken, the speaker's state, as well as other environmental factors.

## Part 6.4 Exemplifying these Pre-Cognitive Considerations

*"The approach to meta-philosophical questions adopted here involves considering the deep conceptual structures underlying the ways in which the sense of what it is to know something is brought to conceptualization within different intellectual and cultural traditions"*<sup>142</sup>

Above is an excerpt from Victoria Harrison's *Seeing the Dao*. As we have touched on already in our exploration of Lakoff and Johnson's cognitive metaphor theory, conceptual metaphors are those metaphors used as underlying conceptualisations wherein abstract concepts are reframed within our sensory experience. In this particular paper Harrison focuses on those conceptual metaphors she believes underlie and structure our understanding of what it is to know something or the ways in which we gain knowledge of something. Further, she draws attention to how those philosophical traditions that are characterised as 'Western', as well as some Indian philosophies, are framed within one primary conceptual metaphor. This stands in contrast with what Harrison believes is an alternative primary conceptual metaphor found in traditional East Asian philosophies.<sup>143</sup>

## Conceptual Metaphors and Philosophical Practices

*To claim a process as being metaphorical is not to strip it of its efficacy in conveying knowledge or truth*

Harrison makes the insight that "while the human capacity for reason is universal, reason is exemplified in practice by means of different metaphors that have a structuring role on conceptual systems".<sup>144</sup> Essentially, the similarity of human bodies, the environments in which those bodies are found and the experiences that come from the interaction between these two produces equally similar primary conceptual metaphors. This is because all 'normally functioning humans' share the same formations of experience: visual, auditory, olfactory, haptic, and kinaesthetic.<sup>145</sup> Harrison does however fail to acknowledge those

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<sup>141</sup> One of the many brilliant insights made throughout this paper

<sup>142</sup> Harrison, Victoria S. 2015. "Seeing The Dao: Conceptual Metaphors And The Philosophy Of Religion". *Religious Studies* 51 (3): p307.

<sup>143</sup> Harrison, *Seeing the Dao*, p308.

<sup>144</sup> Harrison, *Seeing the Dao*, p310.

<sup>145</sup> Harrison, *Seeing the Dao*, p310.

people whose experiences fall outside the category of ‘normally functioning humans’ as in the case of sensorial paradigm shifts.

From the perspective of CMT all abstract thought is primarily metaphorical, consequentially this means that the philosophical investigations of such abstractions and the answers they arrive at are necessarily metaphorical. If the reader’s reaction to this statement is one of disbelief this is an opportunity to remind ourselves of the literal versus nonliteral truth divide that we believe ourselves to be constantly facing

This claim does however have consequences for philosophy and how it is conducted. If metaphorical thought is shaped by these primary conceptual metaphors then by extension the philosophy produced by this thought also takes this shape.<sup>146</sup> Harrison’s essential view is that the various world philosophical traditions are based on and find expression through particular conceptual metaphors. Her paper *Seeing the Dao* focuses on two of these conceptual metaphors: KNOWING IS SEEING and KNOWING THE WAY or more specifically KNOWING IS KNOWING THE WAY. Whilst these are both conceptual metaphors grounded in our embodied experience we will explore how each of these have taken root in different parts of the world and the network of linguistic expressions which have subsequently emerged.

### Knowing is Seeing

*A fundamental difference between Western and Chinese philosophies is that the former is based on an ocular conceptual metaphor while the latter is based on a locomotive one*

The KNOWING IS SEEING conceptual metaphor is based on our human visual experience. To know something is to see something, specifically, to see it clearly. This is generally considered to be a universal constant and later we will explore the dangers of such a consideration. But for now, the KNOWING IS SEEING conceptual metaphor is found in all cultural and philosophical traditions because of this general universality. This conceptual connection between knowledge and sight is one planted deep within the Western traditions of thought; whether that be within the analytic tradition, or more broadly in Western culture. Knowing is an abstract activity; we are provided with a language to describe and interact with this activity when we cross its domain with that of a more concrete activity.

This is not the only place it is found however, as Harrison expounds, some Indian modes of thought are also characterised by this conceptual metaphor. For example, pre-modern Indian philosophies refer to a veil which obstructs our view of ultimate reality; of which Kant’s noumenal/phenomenal distinction could be considered an echo. The conceptual connection between knowledge and sight also plays into how the discovery of truth is described, for instance:

*“...one common Mahāyāna Buddhist term for ‘conventional truth’ is saṃvṛti. This derives from the verbal root meaning to ‘cover, screen, veil, conceal, hide, surround or obstruct’. Conventional truth is taken to be truth about the world as we experience*

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<sup>146</sup> Harrison, *Seeing the Dao*, p311.



*it, not as it really is; the idea is that conventional truth can serve to conceal what is actually the case.”<sup>147</sup>*

Further, simply because we have found a way to articulate the phenomena of conceptual metaphor, of course isn't to say that they are new themselves. The words for knowledge from Sanskrit and Pāli as well as from the Greek all have meanings which refer to vision; meanings which can be traced to their proto-Indo-European root *weid*: 'to see, to know truly'.<sup>148</sup> This is all to say that our various Western and Indian philosophies are conducted within the framework of this conceptual metaphor, which, Harrison argues, goes some way to explaining why the philosophy of religion's initial pre-occupation with Western religions was eventually expanded to encompass the Indian philosophies, most notably the Buddhist traditions.<sup>149</sup> Whilst in previous decades the difficult task of translation has been blamed for the comparative lack of Western study of Far Eastern philosophies, in light of conceptual metaphor theory it seems appropriate to seek an understanding of the conceptual connections at the foundation of those philosophies. Now there is an agreement that the conceptual schemata that underlies the Sinitic philosophies is quintessentially different to the schemata of the Western and Indian traditions. With this quintessential difference being acknowledged it is possible to examine and articulate the ways in which this difference informs their comparison. Essentially:

*“If basic concepts, such as ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’, ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, have different ranges of meaning within Chinese and Western thought, then – until this is understood – cross-cultural philosophical understanding will be seriously compromised.”<sup>150</sup>*

The KNOWING IS SEEING metaphor is nonetheless one grounded in universal human experience. So the difference is not that Chinese philosophy has no evidence for the KNOWING IS SEEING metaphor in its language; instead, it gives way to a different conceptual schemata, KNOWING IS KNOWING THE WAY.

Harrison references the character combination 知道, *zhīdao* or 'to know' has having a high frequency of use within the language. The combination denotes the meaning 'to know' whilst the characters 知 (*zhī*) and 道 (*dào*) when individually interpreted represent, usually, 'know' and 'way, path'. Naturally it would be reductive to think this is all these words represent and there are other usage cases. With this in mind it seems that KNOWING IS ACTING is the conceptual metaphor at play. That movement is the embodied experience that we can frame the concept of 'knowing' within. Harrison believes however that decisive movement is not linked closely enough to our basic sensory experience; that a more fundamental experience is at play; KNOWING THE WAY. Here:

*“the culmination of knowledge is understood not in terms of a grasp of abstract principles but rather as an ability to move through the world and human society in a*

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<sup>147</sup> Harrison, *Seeing the Dao*, p314.

<sup>148</sup> Harrison, *Seeing the Dao*, p314.

<sup>149</sup> Harrison, *Seeing the Dao*, p315.

<sup>150</sup> Harrison, *Seeing the Dao*, p315.

*manner that is completely spontaneous and yet still fully in harmony with the normative order of the natural and human worlds.*<sup>151</sup>

## Seeing the Dao

*The differences between different philosophical traditions can be used to alter the conceptual metaphors at the root of those differences*

Whilst there are fundamental differences there is still the opportunity for discovery through dialogue thanks to the shared universal experience of the human condition. There is a level of ubiquity which primary metaphors carry which means whilst a single primary metaphor might not hold prominence in every area of the world, it is reasonable to suspect that it is at least present. Within inter-cultural disciplines then, it would be of benefit to find ways of utilising these primary metaphors. One such utilisation is their cross-pollination. Here we arrive at the impetus behind the title *Seeing the Dao*; a combination of KNOWING IS SEEING and KNOWING IS KNOWING THE WAY.<sup>152</sup> This is not the first time that such a fusion has occurred. With the migration of Indian philosophy to China, Chan, later Zen, Buddhism emerged alongside other forms of Chinese Buddhism which adopted conceptual schemata from both in creating its own system.

So in Chan Buddhism, a state of enlightenment is one in which a person sees “nothing other than the world of our everyday experience, the world which we know by moving through it”.<sup>153</sup> The path towards this state of enlightenment is one paved by practices “designed to facilitate that unobstructed vision and movement”.<sup>154</sup> This tradition is an example of the blending of primary metaphors to create SEEING THE WAY. This is all to say there are ways in which the differences between different philosophical traditions can transcend the conceptual metaphors that individually bind their perspectives. These possibilities open the possibility for a meta-philosophy that is indeed universal; one of the consequences of this universal meta-philosophy is the formation of an inter-cultural philosophy of religion that can simultaneously appreciate and learn from the differences that separate cultures whilst also traversing and bridging those same cultures through deep co-understanding.

## PART 7: Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Religion

In this fourth and final part we look at how cognitive metaphor theory has already influenced philosophers of religion and the ideas that arrive out of such an integration. Specifically the role both old and new metaphors play in religious language and how CMT informs Edward Slingerland’s embodied realism approach to religion.

### Part 7.1 Applications in Religious Language

*A brief aside on negative theology*

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<sup>151</sup> Harrison, *Seeing the Dao*, p317-18.

<sup>152</sup> Harrison, *Seeing the Dao*, p319.

<sup>153</sup> Harrison, *Seeing the Dao*, p319-20.

<sup>154</sup> Harrison, *Seeing the Dao*, p319-20.

A concern for the nature of religious language is whether or not it is possible to talk about God without misrepresenting that which is being referred to, as well as whether that language carries anything meaningful about the referent. Religious language is usually understood as both the written and spoken language typically employed by religious believers when they describe their religious experiences and beliefs. Issues arise from this when non-religious people can employ the exact same language but not with reference to religious experiences and beliefs. So if not in the words themselves, wherein does the religiosity of this particular type of language reside?

Victoria Harrison offers the following definition: religious language is “language that is used either to serve a religious purpose or in a religious context, or both.”<sup>155</sup> This definition has been included here because it articulates broadly the function and environment of the specific type of language we are concerned with. Naturally there are concerns regarding the boundaries of a religious context and the origins of a religious purpose however these concerns are not the concerns of this paper. What is of concern is how a world-transcendental God, as reported in the Abrahamic traditions for example, is described using mundane religious language. As mentioned previously this issue has been a longstanding one with a myriad of responses. The literalist interpretation of religious language wherein a world-transcendent God is the genuine referent is one such response. This is problematic when considering how a world-bound literal language refers to a world-transcendent God; a being beyond language. This then leads into negative theology wherein a religious believer can only legitimately make ‘God is not...’ statements rather than ‘God is...’ statements.

## Part 7.2 Old and New Conceptual Metaphors

*The introduction of new conceptual metaphors within religious language specifically allows for the potential of new experienced realities*

Whilst the majority of the conversation so far has been on the conceptual metaphors that we have developed and been developed by, cognitive metaphor theory has implications for how we might shape our experiences in the future. The creation of new conceptual metaphors is not an impossibility; the cross domain mappings provided by THE BRAIN IS A COMPUTER has become ubiquitous. The adoption of new primary metaphors to our conceptual system enables new experiences of our reality. A conceptual metaphor’s ability to only frame a particular perspective of any given concept at any given time leads to the opportunity for the multiplicity of conceptual metaphors. This has major repercussions for religious language and by extension religious diversity.

Harrison takes Lakoff and Johnson’s claim that people who employ different conceptual metaphors may experience different realities and applies this to religious diversity. The introduction of new conceptual metaphors within religious language specifically allows for the potential of new experienced realities. Specifically, new conceptual metaphors can make available new religious experiences that otherwise would not have been possible. These changes in experienced reality within a religious context aren’t new. Whilst not completely original, the ushering in of the GOD IS FATHER concept to Semitic monotheism by Jesus has shaped the experienced realities of millions of people. Equally so the

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<sup>155</sup> Harrison, Victoria S. 2007. "Metaphor, Religious Language, and Religious Experience". Sophia 46 (2): p128.

conceptual metaphors embedded in the scriptures of the world traditions each play a role in generating these experienced realities.<sup>156</sup> As long as the conceptual metaphor foundation of these experienced realities is honoured then they are, on a linguistic level, void of conflict. If conceptual metaphors necessarily only convey a particular perspective on a particular referent then the experienced realities that they support must be similarly constituted.

Framing religious language within this understanding of conceptual metaphor exposes a problematic aspect of articulating religious experience. If a conceptual metaphor maintains prominence within a tradition then it, by consequence, prescribes a particular way of experiencing the divine whilst preventing others. The logical end point of such an assertion is most if not all religious traditions have been formed by and through specific conceptual metaphors.<sup>157</sup> The repercussion of this end point is twofold. Firstly, if a religious community becomes consciously aware of the conceptual metaphors that drive their experience of the divine, this not only allows a deeper exploration of those constructs, but it also allows the development of alternative constructs that explore those aspects of the experience which are not articulated within those already embedded. Secondly, this same internal exploration of alternative constructs can be replicated externally. A deeper comprehension of the conceptual metaphors at the foundation of other traditions leads to a deeper compassion towards those people whose experienced reality is different. As the world faces increasing globalisation and people are more dependent on one another then this can only be a good thing. Experimentation with concepts and new metaphors is as essential for people in the present as the creation of now traditional metaphors were essential to the people of the past. To explore new metaphors is not to forsake 'old' ones; it is to add to the collection of tools at our collective disposal.

### Part 7.3 Comparative Religion

*"If we want to know what people really think about [a] concept, then we need to look at the actual metaphors they use when discussing the concept rather than third- person, theoretical accounts of the concept"*<sup>158</sup>

Individuals vary from one another within a given community. Belief systems are the metric of choice for Edward Slingerland. This variance however can also be found at the individual level with very few individuals maintaining entirely consistent beliefs and attitudes.<sup>159</sup> As we will explore in a moment, many people are prone to switching their beliefs and attitudes depending on the situation they find themselves in. These 'inconsistent' beliefs and attitudes are not the result of a confused individual. Rather, given the wide variation of environments and contexts within which we find ourselves, it is implausible to think we are capable of maintaining consistent beliefs in the absolute. What Slingerland offers is a new methodology for cross-cultural comparative work. Framing research through the concept of embodied cognition, the foundations of which are the embodied realism present in Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory.

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<sup>156</sup> Harrison, *Metaphor, Religious Language, and Religious Experience*, p144.

<sup>157</sup> Harrison, *Metaphor, Religious Language, and Religious Experience*, p144-45.

<sup>158</sup> Slingerland, Edward. 2004. "Conceptual Metaphor Theory As Methodology For Comparative Religion". *Journal Of The American Academy Of Religion* 72 (1): p13.

<sup>159</sup> Slingerland, *Methodology for Comparative Religion*, p8.

This methodology of embodied cognition relies on tenets of conceptual metaphor theory. Namely, that human cognition is dependent and comprised of cross domain mappings and that this cognition is independent of the language we use; further, the language we use that seemingly displays these cross domain mappings are simply representations of deeper cognitive processes.<sup>160</sup> What Slingerland is interested in specifically, and hence the inclusion of his work here, is the projection mappings that occur within a metaphor. The particular version of projection mappings that Slingerland is working with is one which characterises the process as using one domain, the source, to talk and understand another domain, the target. We will discuss later why this particular understanding is problematic but for now it is important to work with this conceptualisation as we explore Slingerland's methodology.

*"If we want to study what people think about religion and how this differs from other ways of thinking, then we should be looking at the level of conceptual metaphor rather than individual words (the word fetishism approach) or philosophical theories (the theory-based approach). In other words, if we want to know what people really think about concept X, then we need to look at the actual metaphors they use when discussing the concept rather than third- person, theoretical accounts of the concept."*<sup>161</sup>

Here is where metaphor supports the embodied cognition method. Any given conceptual metaphor necessarily only represents a part of the target domain. No single metaphor can illustrate all of the entailments of a concept because, the view of said concept is defined by the source domain through which the illustration is done. This is a strength, however, this means that different conceptual metaphors can be employed in different situations to illustrate the entailments appropriate for a particular situation. These metaphors can co-exist through their mutual applicability; forks and spoons are both categorically cutlery, soups and salads are both categorically entrées. Different people will use different cutlery to get at the same food. Exploring soups with forks is an important point we will attend to in later segments.

There are issues however that Slingerland inherits from conceptual metaphor theory with his embodied realism. For example, asserting that there are conceptual metaphors that are universal among human cultures. In identifying with these propositions Slingerland creates a method which, when abused, leads to the dismissal of differences in favour of the similarities. When this is applied within a cross-cultural context learning is hindered when similarities are favoured over differences. Once we become conscious of the conceptual metaphors that underly and support our conceptual systems we will become better equipped to wield those metaphors as exploratory tools and seek a deeper understanding of the conceptual systems of others.

## CONCLUSIONARY REMARKS

Over the course of this section we have covered Lakoff and Johnson's cognitive metaphor theory, its strengths and limitations as well as seen how it might be applied with the

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<sup>160</sup> Slingerland, *Methodology for Comparative Religion*, p9.

<sup>161</sup> Slingerland, *Methodology for Comparative Religion*, p13.

philosophy of religion. The strength of the theory is its foundational premise; the conceptual system which we use to comprehend and relate to our experienced reality and the conceptual schemata of which it is comprised is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. Beyond this there are improvements to be made.

The invariance principle struggles to find a reply to the existence of bidirectional metaphors. I suggest that we make a departure from the unidirectional assumption that comes with the 'source' and 'target' nomenclature currently in circulation. These terms would be substituted for terms, 'internalised' and 'external' respectively. This reshaping of the source and target domains into the internalised and external domains is to allow for omnidirectional movement. Instead of image schemata moving from source domain to target domain, an embodied experience of the external domain is met by the internalised image schemata. Alternatively internalised image schemata can be used to articulate or explore abstract concepts necessarily housed in the external domain. Essentially, instead of one domain supervening over the other as in the first system, the domains are on equal planes which through cross domain mapping move towards each other to create a new central topography. I introduce this concept here because it will be expanded and built upon in the final section.

To literalise a metaphor or to presume it dead is to exhaust it's explorative value. A dangerous designation to make when such a metaphor could be used for further exploration whether it be re-applied it existing contexts or new ones. This is what an enlivening of once dead metaphors could look like. In Section III we will discuss how conceptual metaphors can be constituted as living in their role in articulating embodied religious experience.

CMT's preoccupation with an idealised individual upon which all assertions and observations are made is also problematic. Which is why I recommend co-opting some of the tenets of relevance theoretics. Namely that the interpretations and therefore relevance of conceptual metaphors are dependent on the context within which they are used. This is reaffirmed in Madsen's bag of marbles example; with the shared meaning bag (conceptual metaphors) reflecting the average composition of the individual bags with the variation between those individual bags (personal conceptual schemata) remaining high. In this way individuals have access to the shared collection of conceptual metaphors which are in turn used to structure their conceptual schemata. This is the foundation of the tail-end of the RELICS method, the inter-personal conceptual schemata

All of this rests on a modern theological realism framed with semantics as a theory of meaning for a class of statements instead of the objects to which those statements refer. This allows for both the introduction of new conceptual metaphors within religious language as well as the opportunity for old conceptual metaphors to become exploratory once more. Both of these have the potential to provide new experienced realities. With this re-orientation of theological realism we become better equipped to not only curate a deeper understanding of our own conceptual systems but the conceptual systems of others. Each of these suggestions for expansion and improvement of cognitive metaphor theory are cornerstones in the RELICS method. These cornerstones are what we will be working with in



Section III, but first we need to elucidate the nature of conceptual schemata and ground them in a pre-linguistic understanding.



## SECTION III: The RELICS Method





## INTRODUCTION

In this third and final section we synthesise the findings of the prior sections. First we address a possible destination in George Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic theory of religion before moving on to an assertion of the RELICS method. Between the refutation of Lindbeck's theory and positing the RELICS method in the first and third parts we will briefly consider the semiotics of religion as we will need to be mindful of the meaning making process when it comes time to proposing this method.

## PART 8: Cultural-Linguistic Theory as a Possible Destination

In the following part we examine George Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic theory of religion. This theory has been so impactful in the philosophy of religion that a comprehensive exploration is necessary to understand the totality of Lindbeck's view. However, considering the interdisciplinary nature of this thesis and therefore its limited scope I will have to endeavour to capture the broad strokes essential to his position. After this I will resound and expand on criticisms and concerns academics have shared regarding this cultural-linguistic theory.

### Part 8.1 Cultural-Linguistic Theory of Religion

In his book *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* George Lindbeck offers his cultural-linguistic theory of religion. The aim of which is to offer the opportunity for reconciliation without capitulation between traditions while maintaining the legitimacy of those traditions.<sup>162</sup> Here he asserts that religious experience is necessarily grounded and shaped by our cultural and linguistic forms. In order for an individual to have a religious experience they must first have the capacity and familiarity with the linguistic system of a given religion. However, Lindbeck admits himself that his theory is better suited as a nontheological study of religion.<sup>163</sup> Within the cultural-linguistic approach religions are seen as "comprehensive interpretive schemes, usually embodied in myths or narratives and heavily ritualised".<sup>164</sup> From this understanding religion is a cultural and linguistic framework that shapes the thoughts and actions of an individual.

Religions, within this framework, are considered codes by which the interpretation of religious experience may occur. The assertion that is of central import is that once a religion is learned, its code of language assumed it becomes the "preexperiential physical basis of their conscious experience and activity".<sup>165</sup> This is to the extent that language shapes the domains of human existence that are pre-cognitive.

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<sup>162</sup> Haslam, Molly. 2007. "Language As Expression: A Wittgensteinian Critique Of The Cultural-Linguistic Approach To Religion". *American Journal Of Theology & Philosophy* 28 (2): p237.

<sup>163</sup> Lindbeck, George A. 1984. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, p25.

<sup>164</sup> Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p32.

<sup>165</sup> Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p37.

## Part 8.2 General Critique of the Cultural-Linguistic Theory of Religion

With *Language as Expression: A Wittgensteinian Critique of the Cultural-Linguistic Approach to Religion* Molly Haslam achieves her eponymous task of getting at the core issues of Lindbeck's theory. Some of these are warranted critiques, others we will shift and develop to be more applicable within the context of this paper. Following Haslam, Lindbeck cites Wittgenstein's work as a foundation for his own theory. Haslam's contention being that upon closer reading of Wittgenstein we find not that experience is dependent on symbolisation but its prelinguistic precursor.<sup>166</sup> Naturally this stands in sharp contrast to her understanding of his theory of religion:

*"Thus, Lindbeck defines religion as "a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought." Given this view of religion, doctrines are conceived neither as propositional statements of truth nor as symbolic statements expressive of an underlying religious sentiment. Rather, doctrines function here as "communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude, and action."*

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For Lindbeck, Wittgenstein argues that all symbols and their systems are characteristically interpersonal which is evidenced in the logical impossibility of private languages. From this, it is equally impossible to have experiences that are exclusively private; experience requires symbolisation, and symbolisation cannot be exclusively private as it relies on interpersonal meaning making:

*"Rather than view the human person in a dualistic sense in which the body is taken to be senseless and sensations are taken to be objects of 'inner' perception accessible only to the perceiving person, Wittgenstein maintains a monist view in which sensations are taken to be states of a living organism that have natural expression in the behaviour of living organisms."* <sup>168</sup>

Sensations have the capacity to be private, irrespective of how they are communicated they remain of the individual living organism. These sensations received by our embodied experience therefore have the potential to be pre-linguistic. I say potential here, because I think specifically it is those embodied experiences and their pre-linguistic expression which inform the conceptual schemata that dictates our language use. This also keeps in step with an intrareligious understanding in terms of the at times inherent wordlessness of religious experience.

However, as Lindbeck contends, the cultural-linguistic theory asserts that religious experience is never pre-linguistic and therefore constantly grounded and shaped by our cultural and linguistic forms. So, in order for an individual to have a religious experience they must first have the capacity and familiarity with the linguistic system of a given religion. I, like Haslam, disagree with Lindbeck's central assertion; language is not necessary for

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<sup>166</sup> Haslam, *Language as Expression*, p237.

<sup>167</sup> Haslam, *Language as Expression*, p239.

<sup>168</sup> Haslam, *Language as Expression*, p244.

experience. Our experiences are expressed through our behaviours, with only one of these being language. Examples of individual's expressing themselves beyond language can be seen everywhere. Small children mirroring others around them, people with intellectual disabilities for whom language is not possible communicating through other avenues and dancers who can say a whole lot without 'saying' anything. To claim that language is necessary for experience, as the cultural-linguistic theory does, is to wrongly limit the scope within which human beings participate and interact with their world.

In support of this, Christopher I. Lehrich offers the example of music. At its best 'music expresses itself for itself, in itself, absolutely'.<sup>169</sup> Music can exist outside of language as a medium for translating and expressing an individual's embodied experience. This is not mirrored in Yelle's work where in delineating different language forms he does so at the exclusion of the other modes of meaning making.

Lehrich maintains that a semiotics of music must specifically acknowledge that production and reception need not directly connect. In other words, the intention of the composer and the effect on the listener does not need to align in order for the music to communicate. Further, this non-alignment is not representative of any failure on the composer or listener's part.<sup>170</sup> A semiotics of religion may borrow similar characteristics; whereas a semiotics based solely on language is concerned with the effective communication of embodied experience a semiotics that includes this musical undertone instead values the effective expression of embodied experience.

This approach to embodied experience finds parallels with Peter Meyer as he maintains "immediacy rather than mediacy becomes of eminent theological value".<sup>171</sup> Meyer's own work in *Speaking Reality: Language Research and Lived Experience in Practical Theology* essentially expounds this view in greater detail and evolves this key idea of embodied experience and immediacy. He echoes a distinction made in this paper, that language does not mediate experience but is rather an expressive medium of experience.<sup>172</sup> Language is one of the means through which an individual is able to make their embodied experience tangible. The embodied experience is already felt, but it is through this manifesting that it becomes tangible; it becomes something that can be conceived of or 'touched'. In other words, language is one of the tools through which we move our internal private experience to an external personal account.

### Part 8.3 C. John Sommerville and Religious Expression

*"For it isn't just ultimate "questions" that religion deals with. It is ultimate experiences and ultimate commitments"* <sup>173</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Lehrich, Christopher I. 2013. "Orphic Revenge: The Limits of Language for a Semiotics of Religion". Religion 44 (1): p143.

<sup>170</sup> P144-145 Lehrich, *Semiotics of Religion*, p144-45.

<sup>171</sup> Meyer, Peter. "Speaking Reality. Language Research And Lived Experience In Practical Theology". In *Lived Religion - Conceptual, Empirical and Practical-Theological Approaches*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2008), p157.

<sup>172</sup> Meyer, *Speaking Reality*, p161.

<sup>173</sup> Sommerville, C. John. 1995. "Is Religion A Language Game? A Real World Critique Of The Cultural-Linguistic Theory". Theology Today 51 (4): p599.

In response to Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic theory of religion C. John Sommerville demands a more inclusive view which acknowledges not only religion's linguistic but also expressive and cognitive elements. One of the facets of Lindbeck's position is that religious experience first requires the existence of a religious awareness of mental structure; this illustrates Lindbeck's bias towards the linguistic. It appears that the inverse is true or at least more representative of religious experience. Namely, such experiences depend on an initial state of non-religious awareness; this type of phenomena is so "striking precisely because it is an anomaly within our general expectation of ordinariness".<sup>174</sup> From this then religious language is not the foundation of but the response to religious experience. Sommerville illustrates this in his differentiation of moments within an experience:

- 1.) Awareness of something truly anomalous and, therefore, outside the normal world of experience and
- 2.) The identification of that awareness or experience as religious.<sup>175</sup>

In this formulation it becomes apparent that embodied experiences, specifically those of a religious nature, can start in direct intuition. This is because the first moment is characteristically unique comparative to any other experience because it subverts, confuses or refuses attempts at natural interpretation.

Ultimately, Lindbeck's metric for the study of religion is 'truth', whilst for Sommerville it is 'power'. This can alternatively be called the substance of a religion. A religion's efficacy is measured in its power. However, there is a difference between the power of religion and the power of religious experience. The power of religious experience is in its capacity to affect and change an individual. The power of religion is in its ability to offer a language that best describes that experience and therefore facilitates that change. It can aid in the identification of the experience but the awareness remains with the individual.

With Sommerville's assertion of power as the primary metric of religion he assumes an intrareligious perspective. This is to say there is an honouring of the experience of the people within the traditions of which are the topic of study. Lindbeck, though Christian himself, maintains a secularised position with his cultural-linguistic theory. In Sommerville's words;

*"A discussion of religion that never mentions power will seem empty to those who think of religion more as a thing of the "spirit" than of the "mind," and this is connected to secularization."*<sup>176</sup>

To be a philosopher an individual needs only to entertain a philosophy. To be religious an individual needs to do more than entertain a religion. While it may be inspired by and informed by religious experience, theology sits within the former, within philosophy; it is a reflection upon religion, not religion itself. Here it is evidenced that religion engages with power, while philosophy of religion is, broadly speaking, concerned with truth claims.<sup>177</sup> Here, religion can be construed as a response to a kind of power. What this responsiveness

<sup>174</sup> Sommerville, *Is Religion a Language Game?*, p595.

<sup>175</sup> Sommerville, *Is Religion a Language Game?*, p596.

<sup>176</sup> Sommerville, *Is Religion a Language Game?*, p598.

<sup>177</sup> Sommerville, *Is Religion a Language Game?*, p598.



entails is a level of activity more appropriate to a verb or adverb rather than a noun.<sup>178</sup> This would reaffirm the intrareligious perspective of Sommerville's writing; with religion understood as a practice first and foremost.

In contrasting Lindbeck and Sommerville it is apparent that at least in a professional capacity the former considers religion more as a cognitive function. The latter is focused on maintaining a theory within which religion is a method for salvation, an exercise of power. Sommerville explicitly uses the term salvation in his conclusory remarks, which echoes Hick's preoccupation with how a religious tradition's efficacy is tied up with its salvific opportunities. From this we can learn that RELICS is a method which should acknowledge, honour and be orientated towards the salvific beliefs of these religious communities whilst not maintaining that those beliefs be the metric upon which they are validated. In other words, RELICS is a method that needs to operate within the domain of the philosophy of religion whilst maintaining a deep resonance with the self-understanding of the various religious traditions in the world.

## PART 9: Brief Considerations for the Semiotics of Religion

In this intermediate part we consider the semiotics of religion. This is where we will examine different suggestions for how meaning making occurs within religious language. Naturally this, like the majority of the subjects explored within this paper, maintains its own myriad of debates and theses. The small dive taken here is to establish a context and introduce specific language for the establishment of the RELICS method.

### Part 9.1 Lluís Oviedo and Religion as Language

Lluís Oviedo asserts that a new, more complex understanding of religion is reliant on a more sophisticated account of human nature. Further, that the human feature of language is an appropriate framework for this complex understanding.<sup>179</sup> This natural language is the foundation for specialised or derived languages. These are languages that pertain to a particular field, activity or general subset of the human experience. Oviedo suggests that it would benefit the study of religion if we thought of it as one of these derived languages. From this understanding, religion is founded in a natural language while introducing its own semantic field and grammar appropriate for the expression of the experiences of the individuals who use it. However, religion as a language extends beyond religious language itself; it encompasses an integrated "system of references comprising external symbols, rituals, images, a calendar, a set of social roles and rules, and established behaviour codes".<sup>180</sup>

Like natural languages coming in a variety of forms, whether they be Swahili or Spanish, so too we have a variety of religions. Like natural languages, religions require evolution and the

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<sup>178</sup> Sommerville, *Is Religion a Language Game?*, p598.

<sup>179</sup> Oviedo, Lluís. 2015. "Religion As A Language: Exploring Alternative Paths In Conversation With Postreductionist Anthropologies". *Zygon* 50 (4): p985-86.

<sup>180</sup> Oviedo, *Religion as a Language*, p994.

incorporation of new terms and rules to remain vital in new contexts. One of the ways religion achieves this is in combining with other derived languages whether that be art, law, morality and so on.<sup>181</sup> In this combination more complex expressions are made available.

Oviedo acknowledges that in treating religion as a language we align ourselves more with the conscious and reflective mind and as a result become less concerned with the subconscious and spontaneous being.<sup>182</sup> Though like with any natural language its everyday use becomes more spontaneous and less reflective or laboured over time. The strength of the religion as a language approach is that it creates a structure for the study of the cognitive and cultural elements of any given religious tradition as well as their interaction; in the same way Mandarin and Xhosa are no more true than the other perhaps so too are Christianity and Sikhism.

The weaknesses of such a position however outweigh these strengths. In relying on the structure of language we run the risk of not accounting for instances that fall outside that structure. Religion as a language and its reliance on an integrated which contains but is not limited to religious language seems to be a category too large to be useful. Conceiving of religion as a derived language places it at the mercy of examining sub-derived languages. Film is said to have a visual language but director Christopher Nolan has his own visual language that operates within that area. So too do many religious people have their own religious language, a language that may very well sit within a larger language but is nevertheless deeply personal and specific to the individual. Ironically, what the study of religion as a language fails to capture is religion's religious character; the paradigm shifting re-orientation of an individual's experienced reality. In examining religion as a language we lose the pre-linguistic nature of embodied experience. So while perhaps useful from a socio-cultural perspective, this fails to capture religious life beyond language.

## Part 9.2 Jonathan Tran's Attuned Speakers

*"The weight of any idiom's utterance requires an entire universe of constellated relationships within which the utterance exerts its gravity"*<sup>183</sup>

This weight of an idiom is provided by the context within which an idiom is used; of which is itself comprised of a myriad of factors from social, political and cultural conditions, to internal mental states and external world objects and settings. The myriad of factors at play are by nature agreements between attuned speakers. This attunement can be as specific as that of an immediate family or as broad as the human species. These agreements are the binding agent of an idiom's meaning while simultaneously providing the means by which an idiom's weight may shift or even change meaning.<sup>184</sup>

This is a lofty assertion, especially when it appears on the surface as the prioritisation of language. However, this is not that; attunement can come about through different methods of which language is one. A concern that arises from this assertion is that although it is certainly plausible that linguistic conventions contribute to meaning and

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<sup>181</sup> Oviedo, *Religion as a Language*, p995.

<sup>182</sup> Oviedo, *Religion as a Language*, p997.

<sup>183</sup> Tran, Jonathan. 2016. "Linguistic Theology: Completing Postliberalism's Linguistic Task". *Modern Theology* 33 (1): p53.

<sup>184</sup> Tran, *Linguistic Theology*, p53.

correct usage it is implausible to consider all meaning is this attunement or communal agreement. This would be a valid concern if Tran's assertion didn't extend beyond linguistic conventions. However, this is not the case as he instead prioritises the embodied experiences of those in attunement.

### Part 9.3 Iris M. Yob on Metaphor and Religious Language

As Iris M. Yob describes it, metaphor, within the context of religious language, provides 'cognitive access to realities presumed to exist'.<sup>185</sup> Metaphor's capacity for both exploration and explanation means it is not required to prove the existence of the concept which it designates. In following this description Yob provides the Egyptian term Ka, its assigned bird symbol and a shadow soul capable of reinhabiting the bodies of the deceased signified by said term and symbol. The use of this term and symbol did not function as a proving of its designated concept; rather it allowed the Egyptians to explore notions of the afterlife and reflect those explorations in their burial rites.<sup>186</sup> Metaphor exists first and foremost as an exploratory tool. As a means of exploring the interiority or private experience of an individual as well as the spaces and concepts that extend beyond that experience.

The danger present in any given metaphor is to deem it solely explanative. To take a metaphor literally is to strip it of its explorative power. In doing this we discourage the exploration of the ideas and meanings offered. This remains true of even the oldest and most commonplace metaphors we have. There is an entire discourse surrounding what are called 'live' and 'dead' metaphors and the semantic divide between them. The former being the creative poetic metaphors or the obvious cases and the latter being those phrases whose once nonliteral meaning has become their first or only meaning. This is a false dichotomy; phrases do not leap over the chasm between the literal and nonliteral. We stop exploring the ideas that they offer in favour of the comfort of the well-known path. The phrase 'food for thought' is no less metaphorical than when it first originated. We simply explored the concept so many times through continual use that the process of exploration has become nigh instantaneous. There's a reason why 'Heavenly Father' is at the top of the prayer and not slid somewhere in the middle. This is all to say that just because a metaphor has become commonplace does not mean alternatives should not be sought nor that it has lost its own explorative efficacy. Just because a metaphor is old does not mean it is exhausted.

A further characteristic of metaphor within this religious context is that multiple metaphors can be used to explore the notions of the transcendent. This can be either within the framework of a single transcendental Real for which the different religious traditions are different explorative metaphors. Or, it can be within the framework of each religious tradition using multiple metaphors to explore their own religious experience. The assertion offered here is that wherever you fall in the debate, the explorative power of metaphor and our essential need for it is equally constituted in each perspective.

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<sup>185</sup> Yob, Iris M. 1993. "Teaching In The Language Of Religion". Religious Education 88 (2): p229.

<sup>186</sup> Yob, *Teaching in the Language of Religion*, p229.

## PART 10: Hyper-Pluralism and the RELICS Method

The intentional structure up until this point in the paper is that each part of each section has been segmented further based on a unifying idea. Considering that the content of this part is *the* unifying idea of the paper this structure will be replaced by a listing of two sets of assertions. The first set establishes the need for a hyper-pluralist account of religious diversity while the second set is the foundation of the RELICS method, a response to this need. Each set is accompanied by explanations that go into the reasoning behind them. Finally a brief moment will be taken to provide some conclusions, limitations and possible applications of the RELICS method.

### Part 10.1 First Set

- 1.) A pluralist position that prescribes a notion of the noumenal Real, no matter how progressive, will always find adversaries.  
*therefore*
- 2.) A religious theory of religious pluralism cannot escape the exclusivist-inclusivist-pluralist trichotomy.  
*therefore*
- 3.) A hyper-pluralist account of religious diversity needs to transcend this trichotomy.  
*therefore*
- 4.) A hyper-pluralist account of religious diversity instead relies on embodied religious experience as an equalising, universal capacity of human nature

### A Hyper-Pluralism

While the Kantian distinction was useful for Hick it meant that his pluralism was preoccupied with the accounting of both the phenomenal and noumenal aspects of religious life. The noumenal Real by nature is not directly perceptible but we are able to relate to it through the phenomenal Real. Therefore, any theory that makes claims on the nature of the noumenal Real - for example Hick and the ultimacy of the soteriological concern – becomes at least in part prescriptive. This is evidenced in the requirement for change in the self-understanding of most religious adherents.

For a pluralism to earn the prefixal ‘hyper’ it needs to supervene on the trichotomy mentioned above. It does this by relying not on the specific conception of the various phenomenal Real but on how those conceptualisations come to be made manifest. The implication being that regardless of the phenomenal Real, the conceptual schemata we use for its construction as well as the means by which we relate to it are universal. In this way, whether or not an individual is inclusivist, exclusivist or pluralist the underlying conceptual system by which they formulate their perspective, whilst aesthetically different, is constituted within the same method.

From this understanding we remove the coercive element of a regular pluralist position on two fronts. First, a hyper-pluralist position is characteristically and wholly a descriptive perspective which examines universal human capacities rather than the reports of the

noumenal Real that these capacities may offer. Second, unlike pluralism, it cannot be construed as another form of exclusivism because the foundation of a hyper-pluralist theory is the examination of the evidence and the means by which the members of the trichotomy make their own arguments.

Hyper-pluralism supervenes the trichotomy specifically because it is the mode by which the exponents of any given position give their evidence. In other words, it is not *what we are saying* but *how we are saying it* that underlies a hyper-pluralist position. There is no longer a superior noumenal reference point by which to frame all discourse; rather the reference point needs to be distinctly human. As we will explore soon with the RELICS method the point of reference is the relationship between embodied experience and the conceptual schemata used in the relating to that experience. In maintaining embodied experience as the foundation of a hyper-pluralist position there is a reliance not on an unapproachable relativity but a study of a necessarily human objectivity. This also circumvents Buridan's paradox as the question is no longer why an individual may choose one tradition over the other but that any and every individual has reasons and is capable of making that choice.

Hyper-pluralism is also distinctly and necessarily a philosophical position on religious experience, not a religious philosophy of religion. Religion and religious experience are different entities; people are capable of having 'religious' or 'spiritual' experiences without adhering to a specific religion. Religion, then, is a collection of verbal and non-verbal communications that are employed for the purpose of communicating religious embodied experiences. From this distinction a hyper-pluralist position can operate on a pre-religious tradition level so that it adheres not only to the embodied experiences of those within a religious tradition but also those outside those traditions. Further it is motivated by a shifting from diversity-as-problem-to-be-solved to diversity-as-difference-to-be-valued. If successful a hyper-pluralist position dissolves unmerited boundaries to reveal educational differences. We turn now to an offering of the RELICS method, a hyper-pluralist account of religious diversity.

## Part 10.2 Second Set

- 1.) Conceptual metaphor theory, while useful, fails to properly capture embodied religious experience and therefore religious expression.  
*therefore*
- 2.) Amendments are required via a new method which properly captures the expression of embodied religious experience.  
*therefore*
- 3.) A method is offered which requires the amendment of three key notions:
  - a. Conceptual metaphors are composed of cross domain mappings between internalised and external domains, not source and target domains.
  - b. Conceptual schemata are structured by inter-personal meaning making, not only by immediate experience.
  - c. Conceptual schemata depend on living conceptual metaphors and their exploratory function to remain vital in both new and old contexts, not only on their frequency of use.

## Religious Expression via Living Inter-personal Conceptual Schemata

The RELICS method is in essence a co-opting of the foundation of Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory and a building upon those foundations within the context of embodied religious experience and its expression. In what follows is an explanation of the assertions above, however, these explanations will be presented in reverse to how they appear in the abbreviation. So we first elaborate on our particular version of conceptual schemata and how they operate before moving on to clarifying their inter-personal nature and why it is important that they are living and not dead.

### Conceptual Schemata and the Constitution of their Conceptual Metaphors

If we want to understand the range of religious beliefs that constitute the diversity we see in the world then we need to look at the conceptual schemata which inform those beliefs. Specifically, the conceptual metaphors which comprise those conceptual schemata. Remembering that metaphor as an exploratory tool provides cognitive access to realities and concepts *presumed* to exist. They do not guarantee the existence of the concept they illustrate but they do allow the exploration and consideration of that concept. Further, no single metaphor can wholly explore a concept, which caters to the possibility of multiple concurrent metaphors.

Now we turn to Madsen's refutation of the invariance principle through his examples of bidirectional metaphor and sensory loss. With these he showed how an ordering from the abstract through to the embodied is not evidenced in the way some conceptual metaphors operate and relate to the concepts they explore. This is the motivation for a new conceptualisation of cross domain mappings. This is the same conceptualisation we first introduced at the end of Section II. To better represent the seemingly omnidirectional movement of conceptual metaphor we need to first rename our domains and then reconsider the movement that occurs when the mappings of these domains cross.

Our new terms are the 'internalised' domain and 'external' domain. This new conceptualisation situates the individual as the boundary between domains when understanding conceptual metaphors. Instead of image schemata moving from source domain to target domain, an embodied experience of the external domain is met by the internalised image schemata. Alternatively internalised image schemata can be used to articulate or explore abstract concepts necessarily housed in the external domain. Essentially, instead of one domain supervening over the other as in the first system, the domains are on equal planes, which via cross domain mappings move towards each other to create a new central topography. This new topography is then internalised as conceptual schemata of an individual's overarching conceptual system.

This has parallels and was informed greatly by Janet Soskice's interanimation theory where a metaphor is considered successful when it creates a new meaning that is based on the interanimation of the two concepts involved.<sup>187</sup> This interanimation allows the generation of conceptual schemata and therefore can be applied within the context of religious

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<sup>187</sup> Soskice, Janet Martin, *Metaphor and Religious Language*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, p53.



expression. The evocative function of metaphors is a boon when applied to embodied experience as it facilitates the exploration and relating to and of those experiences. While conceptual metaphors may evoke a variety of responses, whether they be more broadly emotional or context dependent, this does not mean that those same metaphors have no explanatory or cognitive function. We can go a step further than this, arguing that not only do conceptual metaphors contain evocative *and* cognitive functions, it is the latter that supervenes on the former; a conceptual metaphor can only be effective when it is first regarded as reflection of the embodied experience of the individual.

### The Inter-Personal Nature of Conceptual Schemata

The presence of an idealised individual at the centre of conceptual metaphor theory is a criticism that has been sounded in this paper. So in order to account for the variation between individuals and how they utilise conceptual schemata, we turn to the inter-personal mediation of the image schemata used in their construction. Image-schemata is culturally constructed via the bidirectional transference between anthropogenetic development and cognitive processes.

This is best exemplified in Madsen's bag of marbles exercise. The shared meaning bag (conceptual metaphors) reflecting the average composition of the individual bags with the variation between those individual bags (personal conceptual schemata) remaining high. In this way individuals have access to the shared collection of conceptual metaphors which are in turn used to structure the conceptual schemata which inform their embodied experience. Here the Levinasian ethics we explored in Section I becomes valuable, as other-centredness becomes more apparent within this framework. Individuals must recognise and value the other, in one of its senses, because it is through inter-personal meaning creation that conceptual schemata becomes strengthened. A fortunate consequence of this is the possibility of compassion is not only fostered within but also between individuals.

Within conceptual metaphor theory the immediacy of embodied experience is the foundation of conceptual metaphors. However this becomes problematic when considering sensory loss, trauma or other forms of paradigmatic shifts in the human experience. What asserting the inter-personal nature of conceptual metaphor accommodates is the understanding that we do not need to have personally embodied the same experience that motivates a conceptual metaphor in order to understand and use it. In other words, conceptual metaphors may initially arise in embodied experience, but their general use, and therefore adoption in an individual's conceptual schemata, does not require that individual to have shared that experience.

### The Vitality of Conceptual Schemata Relies on Living Conceptual Metaphors

Traditionally, dead metaphors are phrases in which their metaphorical meaning has become their first or only meaning. Living metaphors are phrases in which their metaphorical meaning requires interpretive effort. These characterisations are not entirely sufficient for conceptual metaphor, especially within the context of embodied religious experience. Instead here we maintain the dead/living dichotomy but redefine it within this context.

As posited briefly at the end of Section II, what makes conceptual metaphors alive or dead is their exploratory status. Dead conceptual metaphors currently exist in various religious traditions because we have assumptively designated them as such through a high frequency of use. The process of recalling high frequency metaphors becomes more and more refined, and so it becomes increasingly engrained in a particular context with a particular meaning. In other words, as specific phrases become more and more common the exploratory pathway becomes more trodden and less interpretive effort is made.

Experimentation with image schemata and the construction and exploration of new conceptual metaphors is as essential for people in the present as the creation of the now traditional conceptual metaphors were essential to the people of the past. To explore new conceptual metaphors is not to forsake 'old' ones; it is to add to the collection of tools at our collective disposal. Importantly, the introduction of new conceptual metaphors within the context of religious expression allows for the potential of new experienced realities. 'Old' conceptual metaphors share this potential as long as they are returned to an enlivened state whereby their exploratory function is restored over their explanatory function. This is achieved when we take the conceptual schemata we have internalised (and therefore take for granted) and re-envision them as external image schemata. Fittingly, this is echoed in Hick's consideration of *upaya* or skilful means. Here skilful means could be considered as the continued enlivening of conceptual metaphors and understanding their restricted perspective not as a limitation but an opportunity for further exploration. Each religious tradition offers multiple conceptual metaphors to articulate embodied religious experience. The task of the individual is to find the conceptual metaphors that best articulate their experience.

## CONCLUSIONS AND POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS

The first set of assertions is a re-positioning of the task at hand when it comes to accounting for religious diversity. The second set of assertions is the providing of a method by which that task may be undertaken. The RELICS method is an offering of a table at which different religious traditions, different religious people may share their embodied religious experiences and the differences between them can be celebrated and learned from. This is the true task of the hyper-pluralist. Through a mutual understanding of how living interpersonal conceptual schemata shape our religious expressions this is possible.

A more refined and therefore substantial RELICS method could find pragmatic application in a variety of contexts. Within religious conflict as part of peace negotiation strategies and within legislation as a new way of articulating and understanding religious expression. As well as within education, specifically secondary, as a means of studying religious traditions and beliefs that goes beyond comparative religion by exploring the conceptual schemata that inform those traditions and beliefs.

So while we are at the end of this paper we are only approaching the start point. Many of the assertions made above, while supported by the previous sections, have only been provided with precarious foundations here. Many of these require more in-depth research whereby evidence can be collected and presented. Within a larger scope, it would be worth

investigating a possible connection between the issues of vagueness and borderline cases found in semantics and metaphysics with the characteristic vagueness of metaphor. Additionally, Janet Soskice's interanimation theory of metaphor deserves more exploration than what has been provided here. Much like Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (the echo of which can be found throughout), the work in this paper is fragmented in nature as it covers various disciplines and ideas within those disciplines. So in the attempt to rope them together the links between some of these ideas are currently characteristically thin. I mention *Investigations* by no means to draw parallels of quality between that and this, simply to account for this fragmentation. Naturally, the offering of the RELICS method will not be nearly as impactful as his language games, that being said, he did get to write in bullet points. Still, in offering this method I hope to have contributed to the true pluralist goal of compassionate dialogue and understanding.



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## IMAGES



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